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Increasing Cultural Competence through the Method of Appreciative Inquiry

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The purpose of this study is to examine the ways to utilise the theory and method of Appreciative Inquiry, applied in the non-formal international training programme Intercultural Navigators. The training was organised in 2008-2009 by the international cultural organisation British Council Finland - the working partner of this study. The study aimed at exploring how the use of the Appreciative Inquiry method contributed to the development of cultural competence among multi-professional group of participants. The results of the study aimed to contribute to the overall evaluation of the British Council's activities and explore the method to promote cultural diversity.

Appreciative Inquiry is both a philosophy and a methodology for positive change, which is based in the process of looking for the best in people and situations. It can be seen as a positive mindset or an intervention method, for facilitating positive change in any human system, such as a community, organisation or a family. Cultural competence is a mindset and a process to make communication and interaction with people from different backgrounds easier and more efficient through specific skills.

This qualitative study was conducted through a focus group interview with 10 participants of the Intercultural Navigator programme. The findings were analysed using the inductive content analysis.

Findings revealed three main categories in which AI is useful in developing cultural competence: (1) positivity, (2) tools of communication and (3) the process of "inviting difference". All of the categories were considered equally important in both, professional and personal lives, however transforming the ideology into action was difficult in everyday life. This study showed that Appreciative Inquiry could be a good base to develop cultural competence.

Key words, Appreciative Inquiry, Cultural Competence

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli tutkia tapoja käyttää Arvostavaa Kyselyä teoriana ja metodina. Arvostavaa Kyselyä käytettiin kansainvälisessä Intercultural Navigators -koulutuksessa. Koulutus järjestettiin vuosina 2008 - 2009 ja sen järjesti tämän tutkimuksen työyhteiskumppani, kansainvälinen kulttuurijärjestö, British Council Finland. Tutkimus perehtyi Arvostavan Kyselyn käyttöön osana moniammatillisen osallistujaryhmän kulttuurienvälisen osaamisen kehitystä. Tutkimus tuottaa lisäarvoa British Councilin toiminnan yleiseen arviointiin ja kartoittaa metodin käytettävyyttä monimuotoisuuden eteenpäin viejänä.

Arvostava kysely on positiivisen muutoksen filosofia ja metodi, jonka perustana on hyvän etsiminen ihmisistä ja tilanteista kysymällä positiivisia kysymyksiä. Se on positiivinen mielentila ja toimenpiteen metodi, jolla luoda positiivista muutosta missä tahansa systeemissä, kuten yhteisössä, organisaatiossa tai perheessä. Kulttuurienvälisen osaaminen on mielentila ja prosessi tehdä kommunikaation ja erilaisten ihmisten välisen vuorovaikutuksen helpommaksi ja tehokkaammaksi tiettyjen taitojen keinoin.

Tutkimusmenetelmä oli laadullinen ja järjestettiin ryhmäteemahaastattelun muodossa. Osallistujat olivat 10 Intercultural Navigators -koulutusohjelman osallistujaa. Löydökset analysoitiin käyttämällä induktiivista sisältöanalyysiä. Löydökset osoittivat kolme pääkategoriaa Arvostavan Kyselyn hyödyllisistä käyttötavoista kulttuurienvälisen osaamisen kehityksessä: (1) positiivisuus, (2) kommunikaation välineet ja (3) ”erilaisuuden kutsumisen” prosessi. Kaikki kategoriat käsitettiin yhtälailla tärkeiksi niin henkilökohtaisessa kuin työelämässä. Ajatuksen tuominen ideologiatasolta jokapäiväiseen elämään koettiin kuitenkin vaikeaksi. Tämän tutkimuksen mukaan Arvostavan Kysely näyttäytyi hyvänä pohjana kulttuurienvälisen osaamisen kehitykselle.

Keywords Arvostava kysely, Kulttuurienvälisen osaaminen

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1 INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism and diversity have become increasingly discussed topics in the Finnish society and politics, from the introduction of growing immigration to the country in the past 20 years to the most recent debates on gay rights or ageism in workplaces. According to the 2011 Finnish Barometer of Diversity (Työterveyslaitos, 2012), diversity overall in the Finnish workplace is viewed positively and 57 percent of participants consider their organisation as open for diversity. However any emphasis on visible signs of diversity is frowned upon by most. Professions from business to health care and social work have realised the need and the value of diversity in the globalising world of today. Developing skills and competences of navigating between cultures and generating new forms of interpersonal communication in our new multicultural social reality, is a process that no longer can be taken for granted.

The relatively slow but steady growth of immigration (Statistics Finland, 2011) and as a result the increasing request for inter-professional cooperation in the field of social welfare in Finland sets cultural competence to high importance within the social work profession. Cultural competence is an essential competence to support professional performance. The Finnish Ethical guidelines for social welfare professionals state “Social workers should recognise and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the society. In their work, they should take account of individual, family, group and community differences.” (Ethical guidelines for social welfare professionals, 2007). It is also seen as a responsibility of a social worker, as a representative of the welfare system, to promote and advocate the value of multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity in our egalitarian society, thus encouraging and developing cultural competence of the citizens of Finland.

The British Council Finland, the working partner for this study, is an international cultural organisation which works actively to promote the value of diversity and dialogue between different cultures and institutions for building relationships and understanding between people. One of the successful initiatives to promote diversity and increase cultural competence was the Intercultural Navigator programme. It is an international non-formal training organised in 2008-2009 for professionals of various fields to increase their skills in leadership and cultural competence. It was proposed by the working life partner to investigate experiences of the participants of the Intercultural Navigator programme because the training was implemented four years ago and the time lapse allowed for analysis of its use in everyday life. According to the working life partners the programme was also one of the most successful ones realised by the British Council in the past few years in Finland.

The purpose of the study is to examine the utility and the effectiveness of Appreciative Inquiry, the main method applied during the training, from the perspective of the participants.

Appreciative Inquiry is both a philosophy and a methodology for positive change, which is a process of asking positive questions and looking for the best in people as well as focusing on exploring other people's opinions rather than analysing their behaviour (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The informants of the study are 10 out of the 40 participants of the Intercultural Navigators programme. The study is particularly interested in how the method of Appreciative Inquiry has helped the participants of the programme to develop their cultural competence, the skills of effective communication with people from different backgrounds (Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 14). As it is also one of the interests of the working life partner, the study is aiming to detect in which aspect, if any, of the participants' lives has Appreciative Inquiry been most effective in. This qualitative study was conducted using a focus group interview as a method of data collection and inductive content analysis as a method of analysis.

In this study we would like to investigate one of the examples of good practice on how the value of multiculturalism can be promoted in the society and also explore examples of development of cultural competence. Results of the study are also expected to contribute to an evaluation of the overall process of the programme by the British Council Finland and bring light on how the programme's methods continue to stay in the lives of participants four years after the training was carried out.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The working life partner - British Council Finland

Working life partner for this study is international cultural organisation, The British Council Finland. The British Council (BC) was originally registered as a charity in 1934 in England, Wales and Scotland. The main focus of the BC is to bring forward cultural relations, educational opportunities and creating trust and peace between the United Kingdom and other countries. BC aims towards promoting English expertise in the English language, education, arts, and the way of living and organising society abroad by organising international opportunities to the people of UK and other countries. Perhaps best known for its educational opportunities, BC has English teaching centres all around the world and within England BC works with schools to bring forward awareness and acceptance of other cultures to the younger generation. Around the world, BC has many programmes and initiatives to bring peace and cultural relations. BC is based in over a hundred countries, Finland being one of them.

The British Council works in partnership with different social bodies in Finland, United Kingdom, European Union and all across the world. The British Council Finland was founded in 1945, with its headquarters nowadays in central Helsinki. The main focus of BC in Finland is on the projects within the society and governance. BC believes that cultural relations and

dialogue between different cultures and institutions is crucial in building relationships and understanding between people, organisations and institutions. BC wants to promote social entrepreneurship to support lasting changes in the society. BC also arranges educational opportunities in Finland by providing scholarships for studies in England.

The projects of BC Finland generally aim towards social inclusion and social change and to bring forward intercultural relations on an institutional as well as on a personal level. One of such projects is the Intercultural Navigators programme, which is the focus of this study. Apart from the a training programme targeted at professionals delivering cultural services as well as developing leadership and cultural competences, BC is actively involved in organising various seminars, conferences and workshops around the same topic.

In the regards the outcome of this study BC was initially interested in the long-term impact of the training from the perspective of the participants' experiences with the methods used at the IN programme. It was in their interest to find out whether the participants feel like the methods have been useful for them in their professional and personal lives and experiences since the training 4 years ago. Through this study, BC is able to consider factors to contribute to the development of future trainings, as the Intercultural Navigators programme has since continued yearly with the name of Active Citizens with only small variations but still holding on to the main concepts.

In general BC is particularly interested in finding out about the impact of the training in the participants cultural competencies as well as in their leadership skills and networking between each other and organisations. Out of this main point interest our study will concentrate on the impact on cultural competencies. Considering the small scale of this Bachelor's thesis, conducting a research on the impact of the entire training would have been too demanding on our resources. This led to narrowing down the focus of the study on Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a supporting method and ideology throughout the training. The findings of the study should be able to provide some insight into which parts of the AI method have carried on to the future of the participants and therefore could be said to have the most personal effect on them. Knowing which parts of the methods used during the training are forgotten or still practised will help BC to evaluate and reflect on the importance of certain parts of the programme.

The BC was actively involved in the study by providing time, materials and information whenever asked. Most of the meetings and emails were held and exchanged with the contact person from the BC, the acting country director, Hanna Klinge, who was actively involved through all the stages of the study. She provided us with contact informations and arranged meetings with the trainers of the IN programme, as well as gave us all the necessary background information about the training programme. She also gave us a valuable information

regarding other agents, projects and trainings related to the IN programme and working with in the field of developing Cultural competence in Finland. Hanna Klinge also arranged meetings to make sure we get as much information as needed for the process and was in contact with all of the participants of the programme for us. We were able to hold the interview in the BC office spaces and were provided with all the assistance needed before and after the interview. All in all The British Council and the trainers of the IN programme were active and enthusiastic partners of the study project.

2.2 The Intercultural Navigators programme

Intercultural Navigators (IN) Programme is an international non-formal training project that was carried out by The British Council during the years 2008-2009. The project was implemented in 12 countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, the UK and Ukraine) and in total involved 450 young people in the process of developing their cultural competence and finding new ways of navigating within and across cultures.

The aim of the project was to create a platform for young and diverse group of people considered as the future European influencers, to come together and share their experiences and ideas about intercultural issues. It was also in the agenda of the training to develop their skills in leadership and intercultural competences and to “navigate” within and between different cultures. Expected outcomes of the IN training were that the participants involved in the programme would be able to facilitate positive change in their communities and environments by using the skills and international networks gained in the programme. In the future this would help participants to contribute to the global process of building intercultural trust and create constructive actions that would support cultural diversity among their communities and countries.

Research carried out by the British Council on key issues in the area of ICD (Intercultural Dialogue), in the region of countries involved in the project, showed that there is a true concern about intercultural issues. As a result of globalisation and increased movement within the European Union member states there is a prediction that the need for culturally skilled leaders will continue to increase in the future greatly as it already has within a small amount of time. The Intercultural Navigators programme aims to train young future leaders of Europe to work and live in increasingly multicultural environments, thus bringing forward acceptance and celebration of diversity. Therefore the ultimate aim of the programme was not only to improve understanding of leadership and intercultural communication among the participants of IN programme, but to turn new knowledge into active practice. The training aimed to provide tools and skills for the participants to bring back to their own organisations and continue to

expand the use of the training and working methods learned during Intercultural Navigators. However in the Finnish settings, the goal of the IN programme was not only to increase the communication skills and interaction specifically between people from different national cultures but also between people with different backgrounds. It was also aiming to support the view of the culture in a broad and individualistic view. Thus, even though the participants of the IN programme were all Finnish, they were carefully chosen from different professional fields to ensure the heterogeneity of the group and thus increasing the possibility for larger structural changes in the Finnish society. Therefore in the theory considering cultural competence we will also be focusing on this personal view of culture.

The IN programme was developed on the basis of another training programme the British Council called InterAction, which was implemented in Africa in 2007-2008. The IN training programme was developed and designed in collaboration with international team of trainers in the field of intercultural dialogue and leadership. The team worked together in designing the content, process and delivery methods of the training, therefore the core structure of the training remained the same in all the countries involved in the project.

In Finland the project programme was received with great interest, which was proven by over 200 applicants for the training, out of which 40 participants were selected. The selection criteria was built on the specific market research in the field of institutions and organizations that would benefit from the training and personal motivation of each participant. In order to expand the outcomes of the training programme and make an impact across the society and the country, the participants chosen for the IN training were representatives from different religious, gender, age and ethnicity groups coming from all across Finland and working within different sectors, such as politics/decision making, NGO's, media, faith, business, education, health and legal professions. The chosen participants were all considered, by the trainers of IN and representatives of BC, to be future leaders and people with the potential to make a difference.

The training was delivered through 4 modules and an international Networking event (12 days of workshops in total) which took place during a period of 12 months in between years 2008-2009. The IN training was built on the active participation and positive contributions to the programme from each individual involved. The training programme was designed with the intension to facilitate a collective learning experience and enable a maximum amount of participation, interaction and discussion in order to foster a higher level of analysis and reflection. During the programme a number of tools were introduced, such as the Appreciative Inquiry (AI), the philosophy of Ubuntu, Questioning, the Systems Thinking approach and the Conflict Management, as well as various methods such as a role play, stimulation games, analysis and reflection activities, web groups, peer support and individual mentoring. The AI

method, which implies positive thinking and building a dialogue through appreciative and affirmative questions, was a core ideology and methodology applied in the programme. The focus was driven towards the ideological stand of AI and explored as a philosophy. Therefore the method was presented to the participants not as a method of intervention for that group of participants, but as an illustration of a possible strategy to facilitate future change and also shift the perspective of thinking. At the IN programme AI was offered and presented to the participants as a form of appreciative interaction; an approach of communication in which dialogue starts from asking positive questions and showing interest towards other people's world view.

The training started from exploring one's own cultural background and "multiple Identities" that are carried within ("**Module 1: I Am**" 15.-16.1.2009). In this part the power of assumptions was also explored and how it drives our behaviour. This provided space for the participants to explore and present themselves to the others. In the first module participants were also presented with AI and System Thinking - core philosophies and tools offered by the IN training programme for personal transformation which would help Navigators to get connected to their selves, others and communities.

The journey continued by exploring one's self in connection to the community they live in ("**Module 2: I am because you are**" 26.-27.2.2009). During the two-day workshop, the Navigators were exploring the power of diversity and sharing ideas of what diversity means to each of them individually. They also explored personal positive experiences of how they could strengthen their ability to work constructively with different people and communities using different techniques of intercultural communication. The second module presented the "power of question" and the technique of appreciative interview of AI and how those interviewing method can be used in building intercultural communication. The main objective of the second module was to encourage participants to assess and evaluate their own methods at work and think about new approaches and skills which could be applied in their own organisations.

The third training session ("**Module 3: I am because you are because we are**" 21.-22.3.2009) aimed at exploring the importance of the systems around us and highlighted the meaning of efficient communication among operators for developing positive change. In this session the Navigators expanded their understanding of AI by being introduced with a model of AI's 4D cycle, that suggests a process of transformation through four stages of *dream*, *discovery*, *design* and *destiny* (explained in details in section 3.1) as a method for intervention in the organizations they work in and facilitate development of the networks and communities they operate in. The main purpose of this module was to highlight the meaning of self-

development in order to become a better communicator, thus focusing on one's own communication skills in order to understand other people.

“International Networking Event: I am because you are because we are ... Europeans”

brought together Navigators from different countries in order to create a platform for international networking among participants of the IN programme across Europe. This event was an important stage in the project which allowed the participants of the IN to explore and discuss the diversity that exist within Europe. This occasion also provided an opportunity for the Navigators to learn from each other about different methods and approaches that can be used in their own work in different countries. It also provided an opportunity to build partnerships for future collaborative projects and other actions for a common goal. Each navigator had an opportunity to present their organisation and own projects as well as acquaint themselves with each others' work at the international fair event.

The last part of the training was a practical workshop (**“Module 4: Making the change happen”**) that aimed to assess the Navigators in project development. The Navigators could reflect on the learning experience they had during the training and transfer their ideas for a better future in reality through the projects. In the two-day sessions participants designed and created project proposals that were presented to a jury of professionals working in the field of intercultural communication. The jury gave their reflections and suggestions for improvement for each of the projects presented.

After the overall success of the IN programme in all of the countries involved, the same programme has been carried out three times with different titles but with more or less the same concept. The purpose of this study is to help BC evaluate the efficiency of the methods used in the training and investigate the impact of the IN programme on the participants' lives overall. This will support the process of designing future training programmes and other activities.

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Appreciative Inquiry

In short Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a philosophy and methodology for a process of positive change, which focuses on the positive aspects of human interaction and experiences rather than on challenges and problems. AI emphasises the power of language as a communication channel and suggests that in order to create change and establish understanding we should focus on exploring other people's opinions rather than analysing their behaviour. Therefore,

inquiry in the frame of AI is based on asking positive questions and reaching understanding through curiosity towards others.

Grant (2006) emphasises that the methodology and ideology of AI could be applied in working with any human system, such as families, teams and organizations. AI was developed by David Cooperrider in the 1980's. It started as a research method for theory-building which was used mostly by academics. However, Watkins and Morh (2011) conclude that, through time, AI evolved into an organization change process that is usually associated with the field of organizational development and management. The significance of AI as an organization change management model lies in its suggestion to shift the focus from the traditional problem-solving approach towards the positive-based change approach (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, 2). Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) see the difficulty of the problem-solving approach in the limitation that it concentrates on the challenges and errors in the human interaction. They highlight that the most powerful force for change is rooted in new ideas, therefore AI could bring better outcomes as it helps to discover what could be, rather than try to fix what is. Bushe (2012) points out that over time the benefits of AI were also appreciated in the field of community work and it also became a tool for social innovation and change management.

The AI approach is rooted in the theory of social constructivism and positive psychology. Thatchenkery (1996) expresses that constructivism sees reality as a socially constructed and continually changing process. Positive psychology emphasises that in order to help a person reach balance and satisfaction in life it is not enough to repair the worst things and cure individual psychological suffering but it is essential to build the best qualities of life and embed understanding and optimism towards the future (Seligman, 2005, 3). Cooperrider (2005, 7-8) explains AI as a "methodology that takes the idea of the social construction of reality to its positive extreme, especially with its emphasis on metaphor and narrative, relational ways of knowing, on language and on its potential as a source of generative theory". AI starts from the belief that there is something that works in every organization and that there is something good and positive inside of each of us. Another strong emphasis of AI lies in the language. According to Bushe (2005) AI approaches language, words and verbal communication as the construction blocks of our social reality. In other words, what we say and how we say it becomes our reality and shapes our perception of the world. This is linked to a "power of question" presented by Hammond (1998) which implies that the way of generating a question has an effect on the attitude in an answer, therefore the question itself gives the direction for a possible answer. If the question assumes there is something wrong or to be fixed, the answer will be built in a defensive rather a cooperative way. The heart of the AI intervention lies in the form of appreciative interview, where people involved in a process explore personal positive stories. According to Cooperrider (2005) involvement in the appreciative interviews creates a base for finding a middle ground and a starting point for creating change.

The following are the five principles in the base of the ideology of AI, created by Cooperrider and Whitney (2001):

1) The **constructionist principle** underlines the power of interpretation and the view on reality being socially constructed, in the sense that “what we believe to be true determines what we do, and through our actions emerge out of relationships” (Bushe, 2013, 2). Thus the meaning of inquiry in a process of change is to stimulate new ideas and thoughts which would emerge in new possibilities for action. This implies that in order to reach the goal of positive change, intervention should be approached from the perspective of the process of asking questions and understanding that attitudes towards questions affect the answers (Ludema, Cooperrider, Barrett in Bushe 2011).

2) The **principle of simultaneity** proposes that engaging people into the process of inquiry is already the beginning for change. Bushe (2012) expresses that thoughts and stories, which people bring in to the discovery process, have a direct connection with questions being asked, because questions themselves are never neutral. In order to reach change one should ask positive questions. This also creates a link to the generative nature of AI process, which emphasises the flexible form of the inquiry and suggests that ideas and solutions generated during the process should be the engine to create more thoughts. The new thoughts should challenge participants of the process to reconsider ideas and values which were usually taken for granted, and stimulate them to generate new solutions to the existing situations.

3) The **poetic principle** suggests that the world of a given system is expressed and seen through stories that people are telling each other in everyday life. One should not analyse human’s behaviour, but listen to opinion of the people. However, the stories that people tell have a much deeper meaning than simply illustrating the world they see. Storytelling has an important impact on the communication and social bonding in the organisations. The discussion and narrative approach towards process is an essential component of the AI theory, as it is seen that engaging in conversations and has positive impact on human relationships. It also can reveal deeply held values and provide coherence and meaning. (Barrett & Fry in Bushe 2011)

4) The **anticipatory principle** posits that “what we do today is guided by our image of the future” (Bushe, 2013, 4). This highlights the importance of vision of the future in the present. Therefore creating a positive and appreciative image of anticipative future could be used as a source of energy for actions that we are making today.

5) The **positive principle** emphasises that positive emotions and feelings lead people to be more flexible, creative and open minded. Therefore inquiring into something appreciative brings positive feelings and generates change. (Cooperrider, 2005).

AI as a methodology was described by Cooperrider (2005, 26) as being a “narrative-based process of positive change” that is presented in a form of the *4D cycle*, which is a cycle of four stages: *dream*, *discovery*, *design* and *destiny*. The process of change according to the Cooperrider’s model (2005) starts from (D1- Discovery) discovering the strengths, resources and capacities that an organisation or a community has. This is done through actively involving the members in a process of discovering through dialogues and interviews of “what works well” and selection of the affirmative topics for inquiry. The next stage (D2- Dream) is aiming to create a vision of what the organisation/system wants to achieve. After creating a focus for transformation, participants of the inquiry process are invited to develop and design propositions or projects that would help to achieve the goal (D3- Design). The last stage of the process (D4 - Destiny) is bringing the projects to life and exploring their positive effects and seeking for new discoveries for future development. The process of the 4D cycle is designed to be interconnected and therefore the destiny stage should logically be followed by starting the process all over again.

3.1.1 Criticism

AI is widely discussed and researched in the scientific literature. However, only very little criticism has been documented so far. Bushe (2011) expresses that general criticism of the AI method is connected with the positive nature of the AI theory and its danger of “ignoring the shadow” (Reason, 2000 in Grant, Humphries, 2006, 402). The “art and practice of asking unconditionally positive questions” which Cooperrider (2005, 8) praises in the AI ideology has been criticized for having the danger of leaving the reality of existing settings undiscovered and not addressed (Gant, Humphries, 2006, 402). Bushe (2005, 2) on this matter also raised the concern that bringing up only positive sides could lead to the repression of the negative feelings and images, which could result in dangerous side effects. However, he also points out that this critique evolved from poor understanding of the ideology of AI and he argues that the idea within AI’s positive core is that “behind every negative image lies the positive” (Bright et al, in press). Therefore, AI should be seen not as a tool to focus entirely on the positive things, but more on the positive aspects of things.

Another criticism of AI is in the limitation of intervention that is possible through AI. Van der Han and Hisking (2004, in Grant, Humphries, 2006, 405) talk about the social construction of our society and are claiming that AI often focuses too much on the “support of functional enhancement of an organisation” without taking in to consideration a wider social, economic and political context of the situation. Similar thoughts were raised by Dale and Scott (2011) in

their research about the effects of AI in inter-professional settings. More concretely, they note that the focus of AI is on the people involved in the process and fails to take a change forward because of the administrative settings. Grant and Humphries (2006) stand for the point presented by Rogers and Fraser that AI is not as universal as creator Cooperrider claims it to be. AI has a lot of potential in situations where there is a need for positive energy in identifying strengths and building courage, however it fails in dysfunctional situations where the purpose is to identify unknown problems.

3.1.2 Previous studies

The popularity of the AI in the past decade emerges in dozens of case studies and articles describing various AI processes and their outcomes. Although most of the study cases investigate the process of inquiry in the field of organisational management and development, there is still a very large spectrum of examples of how AI methodology can be applied in different fields, among others in the field of mental health (Clossey, Mehnert, Sily, 2011), health care (Richer, Ritchie, Marchionni, 2009), education (Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, Black, 2009), community work (Boyd & Bright, 2007) and social work with families and children (Taylor, Mills, Schmied, Dahlen, Shuiringa, Hudson, 2012). There are also numerous researches completed for investigating the AI method in practice and studying the benefits of it. Dale and Scott (2011) investigate what is the role of AI within an inter-professional education initiative. Their findings show that the AI methodology was appreciated by both, health and social work professionals involved in the study. Looking for a possible positive solution instead of analysing problems that would appear in inter-professional cooperation gave an excellent ground for cooperation and revealed an “enthusiasm and commitment for this type of work which can be difficult to undertake” (Dale & Scott, 2011, 207). Arcoleo (2001) in her study was interested to find out what stands behind the positive effects of AI, and what makes AI so special for participants. She found out that the attractiveness of AI for participants lays in its personal approach, where the participants of the process are sharing personal stories. The positive focus of the story telling emphasis in the AI method creates a safe ground for sharing personal emotions and thoughts and this “forms the basis of trust between the two individuals and the beginning of an interpersonal bond and relationship” (Arcoleo, 2011, 6).

Based on the scientific publications on AI, the method is widely used all around the world as a method of intervention as well as a research method. However in the frame of this small scale study we could not find many traces of the use of AI in Finland. Apart from a few studies, conducted in the field of occupational health, where AI was used as a method of research (Alhonen, 2012; Manka, Nuutinen, 2013) no other significant sources were found in the databases of Finnish universities and scientific journals. Still it is evident that AI is actively being used in Finland by various consulting organisations and facilitators, within team building and organisational management activities.

3.1.3 AI as a method in the IN programme

For the purpose of this study the theory of AI will be approached mostly from the perspective of its ideology. This section will highlight the aspects of AI that were considered to be important in the connection with the setting and aims of the IN programme during which this method was applied.

Apart from integrating the 4D cycle as a form of the project development method in the later modules (module 3 and 4), the AI theory can be traced through all of the stages of the programme. The main goal of the IN programme was to facilitate individual development of the participants along with the idea that this personal transformation will in the future stimulate positive change in their organisations. In this context, AI was applied as a perspective, a philosophy, and also as an illustration of the possible strategy to facilitate change. During the IN programme AI was offered and presented to the participants in a form of an appreciative interaction; an approach to the communication in which dialogue starts from asking positive questions and showing interest towards another person's world view.

AI was presented to the participants of IN through eight assumptions that Hammond (1998) present as a summary of the ideology of AI.

1. "Something works in every society/organisation/group"
2. "What we focus on, becomes our reality"
3. "Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities"
4. "The act of asking questions of a group, influences the group in some way"
5. "People have more comfort and confidence to journey to the future, when they carry forward parts of their past"
6. "If we carry parts of our past forwards they should be what is best about the past"
7. "It is important to value differences"
8. "The language we use creates our reality"

Hammond (1998, 14-18) states that in order to understand AI, and make sense of assumptions, one must first recognize the role of assumption in the group as rules that influence group behaviour. She explains that assumptions could be approached as shorthand that allows group to work efficiently. Because assumptions show commonly agreed statements of what members of the group collectively believe, but at the same time assumptions hold the danger of taking things for granted based on fixed expectations and fail in integrating new knowledge. Looking into the assumptions helps to understand the group's choices and behaviour, thus in order to facilitate change, assumptions should be discussed and made visible because self-reflection is

in the basis of change (Hammond, 1998, 14-18). Understanding the meaning of assumption also means recognising the past and the influence of the past on people (assumptions 5, 6). The importance of understanding the power of assumptions is also seen in the strategies of the IN training, thus the discussion about personal assumption is placed right in the beginning of the programme (module 1). The objective behind this activity was to establish a meaning of held assumptions and question the reasons behind them by recognising one's own assumptions and explaining them to others.

Another important aspect of AI is language. Apart from the informational meaning that language brings, it also has an emotional meaning, therefore the tone and nature of the language we use affects our thinking (Hammond, 1998, 14-18). Thus in order to establish a positive atmosphere of interaction and to make change possible, we should be very careful in our choice of words (assumption 2, 4, 8). The importance of communication was highlighted at the IN training. Participants were presented with several techniques and methods of communication and had many exercises to practice positive and open ways of communication.

3.2 Cultural Competence

The second theory at the base of this study is cultural competence. Cultural competence is one of multiple terms used to describe a similar meaning; interaction between different cultures. More than a theory, cultural competence is seen as a mindset and a process (Gallegos, Tindall, Gallegos, 2008, 51) to make communication and interaction with people from different backgrounds easier and more efficient. In this study, the concept of culture is broadened and brought down to the individual level where it is important to not only learn how to communicate better with people from different nationalities but with any person with a different background and outlook on life. Learning to interact and communicate better creates trust and understanding between people which in turn builds a foundation for social change. For these reasons we will now discuss first the concept of cultural competence, second communication as a tool to reach cultural competence and last social change as an optimal result of successful interaction between people from different backgrounds.

3.2.1 Culture and Cultural Competence

To be able to discuss cultural competence, the definition of culture should first be discussed. The definition of culture is something that theorists have tried to define but are yet to have completely agreed upon, due to the fact that there are multiple ways of looking at culture (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, 10). However all views on culture share the fact that culture is something human-made. Culture can be seen as a "software" that people use in their

everyday life. It is commonly described as a set of costumes, values, attitudes, assumptions, norms and beliefs shared by a group of people. (Gillard, Haji-Kalle, Jesus, Cascao Guedes, Raykova, Schachinger, Taylor, 2000, 18). Richardson (2001, 21) explains culture as a set of specific defended features which we are born in and “into which we are expected to fit or to which we are expected to adopt ourselves”, therefore it suggests that culture and cultural attributes are something learned rather than born with. At the same time culture is something that is embedded in us by the society rather than individually chosen. However, another perspective suggests that culture can be looked at from an individual perspective of a person or from a larger communal or national point of view. National cultures are perhaps one of the first contexts in which culture is often associated with. The concept of culture being tied to a place, culture being “localised” as Hall (1995, in Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 10) would describe it, is challenged by the argument that no nation has one common way of acting and feeling at all times.

Ting-Toomey and Chung (1996, 237) define culture as existing within a particular community consisting of individuals and their common rules and norms. One cannot be a culture on their own but everyone has their own unique collection of cultures they are a part of (Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 14). We are all part of various cultures and communities whether it is the area of living, an art community or a gay community, for example. The more we interact with others, the more people and their cultures and communities we get involved with. Another aspect that arises within the discussion on culture is the fact that looking at culture requires looking into the interaction between cultures. Gillard et al. (2000, 18) concludes that “if it were not for the existence of more than one culture, we would not think about the culture at all”, therefore to be able to have a discussion on culture and distinguish different features of each particular culture we need to compare different cultures, thus intercultural communication and cultural competence are held in high value in our society.

Similarly to the complex definition of culture, according to Allen (2011, 71) the definition and application of cultural competence is challenging in social work due to definitions of similar terms. There is no single definition of what one needs to become culturally competent, because it is impossible to have one definition of culture that would apply to everyone; culture is always contextual (Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 14). It is not effective to only change one's behaviour when trying to understand people from different cultural backgrounds, but to be able to change one's own mindset to adapt to different situations.

Also Gallegos et al. (2008, 51) explain that the difficulty of the definition of cultural competence lies in the fact that there are conflicting views on whether it can be classified as a theory, a framework or a perspective. Gallegos et al. (2008, 57-59) would classify cultural competence as a social perspective and as good social work practice rather than a theory in order to protect it from conservative scientific criticism because it “seems rather to be a perspec-

tive based upon a number of supportive social theories such as socialization, theories of power, and theories about diversity and values such as equity and social justice”.

The American National Association of Social Workers defines cultural competence in their Standards for Cultural Competence (2001) as a process where a person respects diversity and as “a congruent set of behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system or agency or among professionals and enable the system, agency, or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations”. This would suggest that cultural competence can be looked at from two perspectives: as both a value and a process. From the value point of view, cultural competence is a mindset of having the right attitude in order to create understanding and good communication and interaction among different people (Byram, 2008, 231).

Cultural competence is also a process that will develop over time. In order to develop cultural competence one needs the right attitude, knowledge and skills (Byram, 2008, 230). These elements of reaching cultural competence can be interconnected: to be able to obtain new knowledge one needs the skills of interaction but in order to even have the desire for new knowledge one needs the right attitude and the curiosity to learn more. Reaching cultural competence requires having knowledge of one’s self and others and to be self aware of one’s own culture to be able to separate it from others’. Only by knowing one’s own cultural patterns and behaviours along with attitudes and beliefs can one recognise others’ (Byram, 2008, 231). Some people are naturally more open towards others and because they are more extroverted it is easier for them to gain more knowledge of different people while others might have to work more towards a certain attitude to reach cultural competence. Having the right attitude means being curious and open towards others to gain more knowledge about their way of thinking.

Finally, in addition to the right attitude, to be able to find new knowledge of others and their cultures one needs the skills which make it all possible. These skills include interaction skills to be able to find new knowledge and being able to interpret and relate to other cultures. By interaction only is one able to discover and understand new aspects of different cultures and this is best done by combining all three aspects of cultural competence: knowledge, attitudes and skills, and using them in real life while communicating with people. It should also be noted that when creating interaction among people, everyone is equal and learning from each other (Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 15).

3.2.2 Communication

For people to be able to understand and appreciate each other, they must first of all be curious of each others’ lives and use communication as a tool in reaching those goals of actively listening and relating to another person’s situation. Theories of intercultural communication

suggest that the way people communicate and interact with each other is highly connected to their cultural and linguistic background. Scollon and Scollon (2001) argue that language and cultural background play a vital role in how a person is understood by representatives of different cultures, because the meaning behind words may vary greatly from the literal meaning of them. Similar to language, culture forms the way we understand the world around us. This is why in communication, it is greatly important to learn the skills to listen and understand and be curious of the real meaning behind words as it may change the way a person is seen.

According to Gudykunst (1995, 15) communication is “a process involving the exchange of messages and the creation of meaning”. These messages and meanings are constantly interpreted, consciously or unconsciously by both parties involved in communication. Effective communication can be hindered by the assumption that everyone interprets messages the same way we do, when in fact people have their individual, cultural backgrounds that make the same interpretation impossible. Misunderstandings in communication can be easier avoided when communicating with people we know well but the stranger the person, the more likely misunderstandings in communication occur. (Gudykunst, 1995, 15).

Interpersonal and group communication can be evaluated through the amount of uncertainty or anxiety one feels in communication settings. Both uncertainty and anxiety exist in both, communication with strangers and well known people because one can never fully know and understand why the other person acts the way they do. However when interacting with strangers, the threshold for maximum amount of uncertainty is more easily crossed which makes communication difficult. To feel comfortable while communicating, the situation must be somewhat predictable which in turn makes communication easier. Anxiety in interpersonal communication refers to the level of feeling uncomfortable and stressed in a situation. As with uncertainty, when the level of anxiety rises, the communication becomes more difficult. (Gudykunst, 1995, 10-13). As with gaining cultural competence, to make communicational situations more predictable and thus easier and more enjoyable one must learn more about the other person and their culture.

3.2.3 Cultural competence and social change

Some people might be naturally more open to others due to personality traits or opportunities of exposure to a wide range of cultures (Lehtonen, 1998) but no person is born culturally competent. To indicate the levels of competence, Mason (1993, 177-178) introduces the cultural competence continuum consisting of six stages: cultural destructiveness (1), incapacity (2), blindness (3), pre-competence (4), competence (5) and proficiency (6). At the negative end, cultural destructiveness is when a person is intentionally destructive towards other cultures whereas incapacity is no longer intentionally destructive but is incapable of assisting

people in other cultures facing oppression. In the blindness stage cultural difference is not even acknowledged. Pre-competence occurs when there is some effort of acknowledgement and competence indicates acceptance and respect of all diversity. Proficiency is at the most positive end of cultural competence where there is a full knowledge of competence, skills and attitudes being used in the most efficient way. (Barrera, 2012, 42-43). The continuum can be used in self-assessment to point out at which stage one is in the process of becoming culturally competent. However it does not have to indicate the ability of a person to be capable of being knowledgeable and skilled in all cultures, which would most probably be impossible to test and prove due to the changing definition of culture, but in fact a person can be in different stages in different cultures and situations. (Mason, 1993, 177-178).

The cultural competence continuum can also be an indicator of how culturally competent a state or other systems and institutions are and what are their actions towards acceptance and appreciation of diversity in their bodies. At the most negative end of the continuum, cultural destructiveness takes shape in a system as rules and regulations to specifically target and harm a group of people with a definite cultural feature in them. Examples of cultural destructiveness could be laws that deny certain human rights of citizens of certain ethnicity, minority or religion, such as a law passed in some European countries, starting from France to ban Muslim women the right to wear a full veil in public. A less dramatic but perhaps a more common offence of human rights and ignorance of different cultures on a structural level is blindness where the ideology of everyone being the same flourishes. (Barrera, 2012, 42-43). In a world where everyone is actually the same, this would probably be proficient enough but as argued above, the thought of everyone being the same with the same needs and opportunities is simply not possible. This way of thinking makes it extremely difficult for people of minorities for example to express their needs in a society where the majority already has the power (Freire, 2005, 45). The pre-competence stage allows efforts to be made because there is the acknowledgement that there are differences and variety in the society and that those issues need to be dealt with. When culturally competent, a system is fully accepting of diversity and in proficiency there is a freedom and equal opportunities for all to access the same services provided. (Barrera, 2012, 42-43).

3.2.4 Criticism

In the end, what affects the amount of competence one has, naturally has to do with pure personality traits. This could mean being naturally more social and open towards others or simply being more exposed to different cultures (Lehtonen, 1998). It might be considered as unfair to think that people who are naturally more social would be culturally more competent and that by thinking this way people with disabilities and social behavioural problems might never be able to become even close to being culturally competent because of their inability to socialise in a socially accepted way. Finding new perspectives on one's own and other cul-

tures has also previously been criticized by Byram (2008, 221) with the argument that being open and curious might be considered ideological as it is not universally accepted as a valuable trait in a person. In some cultures it is forbidden to allow to be influenced by other cultures. The value of being culturally competent might strike as a very western way of thinking, one where everyone and everything should be accepted. However as Byram (2008, 221) also said, being truly culturally competent is not about going against one's beliefs and morphing all cultures together but in fact it is the ability to recognise the diversity of people and the values and traditions of others' from one's own through self-knowledge and respect and thus being able to respect and understand those values and traditions of others.

3.2.5 Previous studies

The 2007 Finnish Ethical guidelines for social welfare professionals state that "Social workers should recognise and respect the ethnic and cultural diversity of the society. In their work, they should take account of individual, family, group and community differences." (Ethical guidelines for social welfare professionals, 2007.) The Finnish guidelines perhaps reflect the relatively new phenomena of multiculturalism when compared to the American National Association of Social Workers (NASW) that has widened the definition of cultural diversity as a valuable part of their work in 2001 committing to set standards specifically for cultural competence. The guidelines stress the importance of the social worker's responsibility towards self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge and skills as well as service delivery.

In Finland a guidebook touching on similar attitudes towards client interaction has been published by Socca, the Centre of Excellence on Social Welfare in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Socca is a network organization that works together with the municipalities and educational institutes of the metropolitan area to develop new skills and knowledge in the social welfare services by providing education and conducting research in the field. Socca's guidebook, "Encounters in Social Work" was published in 2012 "to improve all interaction in social work". Some of the recommendations include always starting the process of interaction from a positive point of view and instead of giving advice focusing on listening to the person encountered.

In recent years there has been some research on cultural competencies conducted in Finland focusing mainly on adult training or studies from the perspective of the role of cultural competence in the strategic planning of companies or also in many cases from the perspective of health care professionals and their need for cultural competence in their work. Studies conducted in the social work field mostly focus on encountering a client from an ethnic background. Examples of such studies are for example a case study on the role of cultural competence in the work of social workers in the countryside of Finland by Hytönen (2002) or a study by Assad (2012) on the general skills beneficial in client work and counselling from the per-

spective of multicultural counsellors. The study underlines the importance cultural knowledge and awareness in counselling clients from different backgrounds.

Similar to international business and health services, in Finland the use of cultural competence (kulttuurienvälinen kompetenssi) in the social field is perhaps of the most interest to organisations such as BC that work specifically towards understanding and dialogue between different cultures. Trainings such as the MOD-training (Moninaisuus ja Dialogi) works to prevent discrimination and value equality by bringing up the themes of the challenge of accepting diversity, insight in our own behaviours and attitudes and appreciation of dialogue. The method was developed in Sweden as an attempt to respond to growing racism in the 1980's. The concept was brought to Finland by the Church of Finland and nowadays has a network of organisers in various organisations such as the Finnish national service and lobbying organisation for youth work - Allianssi and Red Cross Finland.

Another action taken by Allianssi is of the Living Library project. The project seeks to foster respect between different people by promoting dialogue among them. This dialogue is created by offering an opportunity to borrow a "living book", a person that is somehow discriminated against, to have a discussion with them on their experiences thus creating understanding between the "living book" and the "reader".

4 STUDY DESIGN

4.1 Purpose of the Study and the Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to discover how the participants of the Intercultural Navigators programme evaluate their experiences of the method and ideology of Appreciative Inquiry, used in the training. The programme was designed and carried out by the British Council 2008-2009, four years before the study was conducted. The study is not going into great detail of the specific exercises used at the training and their theoretical background, instead the main focus is to capture the personal perceptions and experiences of the participants and how they have absorbed the method of AI in general four years later. It was intended to explore the examples and opinions of how the method of AI has been professionally useful for them. The study was particularly interested in how the method of AI has helped the participants of the IN training to develop their cultural competences, as this was the main objective of the IN programme. It was also aiming to detect whether they feel they use their intercultural communication skills more, in their professional or personal life, or whether there is anything differentiating those two.

At the beginning of the study the main research question was defined as:

“How have the participants of the Intercultural Navigators programme organized by the British Council experienced the use of Appreciative Inquiry method in their professional and personal life after the training?”

However during the process of analysing the data collected through focus group interview it became evident that it is not possible to fully understand the experiences without exploring the understanding of the AI method by the participants first. Thus another research question was added to the study:

“How have the participants of Intercultural Navigators programme organized by the British Council perceived the method of Appreciative Inquiry?”

The interest in this study from the part of the working life partner BC was driven from the overall interest in following up on the impact of the IN programme on the participants' lives and in particular how participants use the knowledge and experiences gained at the training in the present time. This study reveals some insight into which parts of the training have carried on to the future with the participants and therefore could be said to have the most personal effect on them. This information will help BC in their overall evaluation of their activities and therefore contribute to the planning of future activities.

Apart from providing BC with the reflection on their activities this study was aiming in more general terms to explore how non formal educational activities, such as the IN programme can contribute to the improvement of the cultural competences among the participants and through that imbed the value of tolerance and multiculturalism in our society.

The data for the study is based on the personal perception of the participants involved in the training programme, thus the findings of the study cannot not be generalised. However results of the study can offer some perspective on the possible development strategies for future activities in BC and to provide an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their professional development and working methods.

4.2 Research Methods

4.2.1 Qualitative research

The qualitative approach has been chosen for this study. The collection method applied was focus group interview, while the data analysis method used was inductive content analysis. Qualitative research method is more fitting for the frame of this study as it is aiming to ex-

plore the subjective world of the researched phenomenon: human beings' own perceptions and experiences (Berg & Lune, 2012, 8).

The qualitative research method is nowadays becoming an increasingly important form of analysis for the social sciences as well as for applied sciences, such as education and social work (Marshall & Rossman. 2011, 1). This is because of its attempt to explore the worlds "from the point of view of the people who participate" (Frick, Kardorff, Steinke, 2000, 3) through which it can contribute to "a better understanding of social realities and draw attention to process, meaning patterns and structural features". Thus qualitative research not simply represents the reality but by using individual experiences of the people gains insight and understanding on the meaning that humans attach to the life situation or researched phenomenon. According to Padgett (2008, 11), qualitative research does best in "exploring the unknown or in finding new ways of understanding", which is what this study is aiming to find.

The foundation of qualitative research lies in postmodern epistemology and constructivism - a belief that world as people see it, is socially constructed rather than objectively real (Padgett, 2008, 7). Thus to understand the human phenomena we should explore and understand the subjective experiences of people. Another influential theory in the base of qualitative research is the life-world phenomenology, which highlights the idea that everything is started from the real life; therefore exploring the experiences of the individuals is a way to root the scientific world in the world's reality (Hitzler et al. 2004, 67). It is also said about the qualitative research that it prefers the meaning over the behaviour, referring to the intention on "document the world from the perspective of the people studied", rather than create explanations on why people feel this way (Silverman, 2001, 38). In this study we are interested in how the learning experience was deepened with the programme participants. Therefore there is no hypothesis of the results; instead the aim is to document thoughts that were evoked by the specific social situation experienced by a group of people. Thus the qualitative approach is ideal for this study.

Berg and Lune highlight that the purpose of qualitative inquiry is to "explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily life" (Berg & Lune, 2012, 8). In a similar way this study is aiming to explore what meaning they gave for AI ideology and how they arranged this new knowledge in their lives.

This study is aiming to provide a more in-depth feedback for BC. Padgett (2008, 16) suggests that qualitative research is a suitable approach to use in a research that wishes to get inside of practice because it provides understandings on the unforeseen effects that programme might have brought as well as shed light on the method's benefits and limitations. Padgett (2008,16) also notes that even though qualitative studies' findings cannot be generalised on a

larger scale, they are still very valuable and informative because they can bring a “description that emerges organically from the practice settings”, thus give an honest and deep prescription of the reality from a subjective point of view of participants.

4.2.2 Focus group interview

Method for data collection in this study was chosen to be qualitative focus group interview. According to Berg and Lune, focus group interview as a technique is an efficient way to collect information and also gives an opportunity for direct comparison of the data (Berg & Lune, 2012, 171). Group members for a focus group interview are usually composed of people who share certain characteristics or have been involved in a social situation that is relevant for the study’s question (Marshall & Rossman, 2012, 149). Often the focus group is constructed of informants who are not familiar with each other. However the settings in which the subject of the study appeared, predetermined the informants’ group for this research and set a strict profile of the focus group which is composed of 40 participants of the IN programme, held in 2008/2009 in Finland. Because of the conversational nature of the group interview it is also seen as a specific form of semi-structured interview (Hopf, 2004, 205), which is one of the most common types of interviews applied in qualitative social research, because of its attempt for inquiry and flexible nature. The interview of this study had no predetermined set of questions and the same questions were asked in each interview, however the structure was still flexible for improvisation (Dawson, 2002, 29).

The method was justified by a number of reasons. As first, focus group interviews highlight the meaning of group dynamics (Berg & Lune, 2012, 171). Interaction among the group is relevant in this study because of the specific occasion of the IN training programme. The experience of the participants of the IN programme is closely related to the shared experience they gain at the training, therefore the group itself has a significant influence on the individual experiences of each member of the group. Thus it was convenient to approach participants of the IN programme as a group to refresh the experiences of the training that took place three years ago. It has also been said that the focus group interview method is convenient in dealing with large amounts of participants. There were 40 participants in the IN programme, which is a relatively small amount of informants to invite for a group interview. We had no previous background of the participants therefore we aimed to involve as many participants as possible to get a more objective view on our study focus.

Secondly, focus group interviews are characterized by having the subject determined in advance and familiar to the interviewees through the particular social situation they participated in (Hopf, 2004, 205). The advantage and purpose of this technique is that it “can generate important insights into topics that previously were not well understood” (Berg & Lune, 2012, 172; Hopf, 2004, 205) and therefore it supports the aim of this study.

Dawson (2002) points out that a group interview allows collecting more objective data because the free flowing discussion among the participants makes the input of the researcher considerably lower than it would be in individual interviews.

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Selection of informants

According to Lune and Berg (2012, 165), the maximum number of participants for a focus group interview is seven. For the reasons presented later it was decided that there would be a single interview venue, while which the participants would be divided in two smaller groups. Therefore it was calculated that the ideal amount of people involved in this study would be 14. The focus group is a group of people from a diverse religious, gender, age and ethnical backgrounds coming from all across Finland and working within different sectors. Taking in to consideration the fixed interest of the study and ample diversity among the participants, as well as the relatively small amount of people involved in the training, it was decided that it would be beneficial and support the objectivity of the results of the study if there were as many participants as possible. Thus it was decided that all 40 participants would be invited. In order to protect the participants' privacy the invitations for the group interview were sent through representatives of the BC. The introduction letter consisted of basic information about the purpose of the study and the main focus of the interview. The letter of invitation can be seen in Appendix 1.

Though professional literature about group interviews suggests that having too many informants in a focus interview can negatively influence the quality of the data (Berg & Lune, 2012, 167), a risk was taken by holding one group interview for all the participants. Because of the importance of the group, we felt that that possibility for them to meet each other and to reflect on their own experiences of the IN programme would be an additional motivation for informants to participate in this study.

Organising group interviews has its own challenges. Firstly, it is impossible to predict how many participants will respond to the invitation to be interviewed. Second, it is very demanding to find a time and a place that would suit all 40 people from such a diverse professional and geographical background. However we were informed by the working life partner that many of the participants would be unavailable to participate due to their current residence in other countries. In order to ensure a greater attendance, two different dates were proposed in the invitation for participation, in order to find one that would be suitable for most participants. After the final date for the interview was decided, participants were informed through the working life partner.

Total of 16 people signed up for the interview. For various reasons which could range from the interview being conducted on a Friday evening after a tiring week to the sudden snow blizzard, only 10 of the participants made it to the venue. The six cancellations were informed to us by the representative of BC who also due to her illness was not able to attend the occasion. Three participants had to leave after the first part of the interview.

4.3.2 Preparing for the interview

Neither of us had previous experience on leading a group interview. In these situations Berg and Lune (2012, 169) suggest that one should artificially rehearse the interview before hosting it. However because of the unique nature of the subject of the study we felt it would be nearly impossible to practise our mediators' skills beforehand, as we could not invite same people twice. Still taking into consideration our previous experience of leading various group activities and some theoretical base gained from the course of our degree programme on interviewing skills, together with our in-depth knowledge and understanding of the research question and theoretical base for the study, we were confident in our abilities to perform professionally at the given settings. Another important factor was the fact that the participants of the focus interview are familiar with each other and, according to the comments from the facilitators of the training, already had a very "tight and strong group spirit" and were very eager to voice their opinions. This reassured us that the flow of the conversation would not rely solely on us.

First stage of planning out the interview was consulting the literature and thinking about the structure and nature of the interview. Dawson (2002, 28-29) points out in *Practical Research Methods* that even though the results are qualitative and there should be flexibility in the flow of the conversation, some supporting questions should be formulated beforehand to guide the conversation in the direction of the research question, especially in the situation when there are several interviews held simultaneously. As we had only a single chance to collect the data for the interview we were very careful in preparing and defining the questions and methods that would be applied at the interview.

The process of defining the structure of the interview started from analysing the research question and formulating more specified questions that would help to collect necessary data for the analysis. It was kept in mind that the IN programme happened four years ago and that it might be necessary to activate the memories of the participants. However as the research question is specifically focused on only one aspect of the IN programme, namely the AI methodology, it was noted that it would be a challenge to keep the attention strictly on AI rather than the training as a whole. Another challenge that was identified from the beginning was that after refreshing the memories from the past the focus should be shifted to current time

and exploration of the informants' feelings and experiences in the present time. One way to reach an open and comfortable atmosphere would come from defining good open ended questions that would allow participants to express themselves but still stay focused on the subject. In order to ensure an equal opportunity for all to speak their mind in such a large group of people, it would be our task as moderators to manage the group dynamics and keep a clear structure of the interviews (Berg & Lune, 2012, 183). Dawson (2002) strongly recommends that before engaging with group interview activities, the mediator should acquire the basic understanding of group dynamics and should be sensitive to the flow of the conversation and different personalities that can appear in the group as well as reflect on how those factors might influence the data.

According to the focus group methods the role of the researcher is to mediate the discussion among the group members and make sure that the discussion stays on topic. Another important part of the mediator's job is to maintain an atmosphere where participants feel free to express their opinion. (Berg & Lune, 2012, 137, 148). The main tasks of the mediator therefore are to guide the conversation with a minimum amount of intervention and make sure the conversation is not dominated by anyone as this could influence the data (Dawson, 2002). It was also mentioned by Dawson (2002) that it is crucial to listen actively and to express this to the responders by keeping a good eye contact and taking notes. In order to be fully involved in the conversation, responsibilities at the sessions were divided. While one of us was leading the conversation, the other one was observing and taking notes of the flow and possible distractions in the conversation.

The mediator's guide, as inspired by Berg and Lune (2012, 179-183), a plan for the interview was presented and approved by the tutors of the thesis at the February thesis day workshop before the actual interview took place. When preparing the questions we also tried to keep in mind the spirit of the IN training and AI which was positive thinking and a positive way of asking questions. The timetable and questions for the interview can be seen in appendix 3.

4.3.3 Conducting the interview

The interview was conducted in the February of 2013 in "Hub", the working space of the BC in central Helsinki. For the interviews two soundproof and isolated conference rooms were used and even though we were helped to organise the interviews, no representatives of BC were present at the interview itself. This ensured a safe environment for the participants to speak freely about their experiences and impressions on the content of the training and methods used in it.

The group interview took approximately three hours and was structured in three parts. It was taken into consideration that seeing their fellow IN programme participants had probably increased the motivation of the participants to take part in the study, therefore before the official part of the interview there was also a time for informal socialisation among the informants. This took approximately 30 minutes and during this time the participants were able to enjoy coffee and sandwiches kindly offered by the BC. In addition for the informants to be able to socialise with each other, Berg and Lune (2012, 150) also suggest this to be the perfect timing for the study conductors to present themselves in a more informal way to increase trust.

The interview session was opened with a presentation of the purpose of our study. The confidentiality and consent form for video recording of the interviews were also explained and presented at this point. Camera was set up before hand to reduce any distractions at the interview and was turned on after all the informants had given their permission. It was explained to the participants that the video camera was there simply to make the process of transcription of the raw data easier and that the footage was mainly used to record the audio, the speech and to help the separation of participants' voices from each other. The footage was not used to analyse any facial expressions or body language of the participants.

Following the forms, the rules for the interview were presented, as suggested in the Moderator's guide by Berg and Lune (2012, 180) which included the respect for others' opinions and confidentiality. The contact details of the participants were asked in case they would agree to be contacted again in case of further questions and to be given the option to read the final thesis. Finally a moment was given to present any questions and three people informed that they would have to leave in the middle of the sessions. This part took approximately 10 minutes.

It is essential for a group interview setting to be aware of group dynamics and establish a relaxed and safe environment for participants to feel free to express their opinions; therefore the interview should start from general, warm-up questions (Dawson, 2002, 77). For this reason, the first part was an introduction part that was for the purpose of refreshing memories of the IN training and participants' experiences. The reason why we chose to ask their favourite memory from the IN training one by one was not to gain any official data just yet but simply to set the mood by asking about their positive memories from the training. This part also took approximately 10 minutes.

Second part focused closely on exploring the participants' understanding of the AI theory and how it was used in the training programme. This is the first part where official data was started to be gathered for the study and therefore it was the first part to be recorded. In this part of the interview the participants were asked to write individually on post-it notes what

they remembered of the AI methodology. Afterwards these notes were gathered on the wall and discussed one by one together with the group. With this form we were aiming to reactivate the group cohesion and facilitate the collective learning where each had a chance to reflect on the thoughts and notes of each other and complete their own understanding and vision of IA. This also gave an overview for us on what informants felt were the most important parts of the AI methodology. At the end of the second part, we as facilitators also presented a summary of the discussion and gave a chance for the participants to correct us to reduce the risk of any misunderstandings that might risk the trustworthiness of the study. This method of “echoing” the respondent was suggested to us by Berg and Lune (2012, 149). The second part took approximately 50 minutes.

At this point a 10 minute break was held and the group randomly divided into two smaller groups for the small interviews. The reason for division of the group in two was to create a space for the participants to feel comfortable to answer the more private questions about their personal and professional lives. Also, as explained earlier, Berg and Lune (2012, 169) suggest that the maximum amount of people for a focus group interview is 7. As three people had to leave at this point, one of the groups had three informants and the other one had four. Both interviews were held in a soundproof room with a previously set camera ready to be used. Having a small group discussion gave more time and comfort for each informant to express more in depth their concrete experiences with AI in their personal and professional life in the present time. Focus group interviews’ limitation is seen in the fact that the answers arising in a group discussion are socially constructed and perhaps more compromises of opinions occur (Berg & Lune, 2012, 173) therefore having a smaller group where informants would share their personal stories would add to the data and ensure that each person has their own turn to talk. This part took approximately one hour with both interviews.

The last part was a short 5 minute session to thank everyone for coming and to answer any last questions and comments that might have arisen during the interviews.

4.4 Data Analysis

The raw data was transcribed and analysed in March of 2013. The inductive content analysis method was used in generating the findings of the study. The method is used to find series of common patterns, and changing variables in both the individual answers and the group discussions. The way in which the topics have come up within the discussion and which are the agreed and disagreed outcomes of the discussion are also points to be examined. (Berg & Lune, 2012, 187).

Marshall and Rossman (2011, 209-223) suggest the following analytic, seven step procedure for content analysis: the starting point is the (1) organization and (2) immersion of the data, followed by (3), coding and (4) generation of the categories and themes. After the categories are defined researcher proceeds by (5) offering interpretation of the data. Process is concluded by (6) searching for alternative understanding of the data before finally (7) putting findings in the form of a report. The data analysis of this study took into consideration all of the mentioned aspects.

The interview was conducted in the Finnish language and was transcribed manually typing the conversations word by word into a Word document. The choices that the researcher makes at this stage of the process should be made with great attention and they should be aware of the effects that the chosen strategy of transcribing the raw data will have on the material and later on the findings of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, 164). Padgett (2008, 139) suggests that qualitative data analysis can be distinguished between spoken language and interpreting the meaning. As this study is mainly interested in the personal experiences and expressions of the participants, rather than in unconscious decisions or motivations, the analysis of the spoken language was applied. During the process of working with the data, special attention was placed on intonation and reporting the intentional meaning of the participants rather than seeking for hidden implications of the speech.

According to the initial plan and original research question, the main material for the analysis was supposed to come from the small group discussions. However after the interview was conducted it was clear that the first discussion conducted about the meaning of AI had a very significant contribution to the subject of this study. Therefore it was agreed for the first part of the interview to be included in the data as well. As a result, the transcribed and processed data was organised into three separate files: one (1) common conversation about the AI methodology and two (2-3) small group discussions on the individual experiences.

When starting the process of managing the raw data, the challenges of working with transcribed data mentioned by Marshall and Rossman (2011, 164) were taken into consideration. Some of the difficulties the researcher might face when designing the strategies data analysis appear because speech is difficult to translate to a written form. The challenge is that written text is incapable of expressing intonations and other expressions that help to articulate the meaning of the spoken language, thus it is more likely to be misinterpreted. (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, 164-165). Therefore when getting familiar with the data of the transcribed interviews the dialogue was played while reading it to make sure the meaning and the intent of the conversations is captured. In this process, the unnecessary and distracting parts of the speech of the informants were reduced to have a better focus of the research question.

After reading/listening to the data several times we proceeded to in depth analysis of the content by systematically going through the dialogues and coding the content. The main objective at this stage of working with the data is to find and conceptualise the core issues and themes within the large amount of data (Moghaddam, 2006). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002, 211) propose that the interpretation of the data within the method of inductive content analysis, could be implemented through reducing the data by taking out the similarities and overlapping “simplified expressions” or codes and forming the final groups and categories from the remained data. Each point that appeared to be significant to the study was modified in a more simplified form and written down on separate notes which were arranged into themes that arose from the conversations. Already at this stage it was clear that the data has two main dimensions: (1) ideology - how the informants understood the meaning of the AI and (2) experiences from real life - how they used AI in their personal and professional lives.

The next step was to proceed with analysing the codes to find similarities and group them into categories based on their shared properties. After this each of the categories was looked closer into, exploring the way in which subcategories differ and relate to each other. Good knowledge and familiarity with the raw data allowed us to navigate among the large amount of information and detect the ways in which subcategories relate to each other and emerge into a bigger picture. The outcome was then documented in a form of a mind map that showed the interconnections among the subgroups.

When reaching this stage of the analysis process we went back to consulting our data with our research question to determine perspective and focus of the findings. The conclusion was made that in order to answer the preliminary research question and fully explore and make sense of the experiences that came up in the interview we also needed to include another research question on the perceptions of the participants.

Berg and Lune (2012, 188) highlight that content analysis of the group discussion should not only stress and point out the arising patterns and themes that reappear within the interview but also take into consideration group interaction. Analysis of the group discussion therefore should also look into the flow of the conversation among the informants at the interview, and point out which notes and ideas were agreed upon or argued within the groups. It should also focus on the ideas most discussed and whether there were moments when an expression of one participant would unite everyone in the group. After the second research question was defined and imbedded in the data analysis, the data was looked back on with the intention of finding the correlation between the two research questions and to look deeper into the group interaction at the interview. The notes from observation of the conversations’ flow at the interview were also added to the data analysis.

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002, 110) describe the qualitative data analysis as a process where the data is first deconstructed into small pieces, compared and analysed, and in the end gathered together as a new logical whole. They also point out that the main aim of the content analysis is to clarify the material to the extent that it will present a clear and reliable conclusion of the phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 110). As a result of the analysis the three main findings of the study were as follows: (1) “positivity”, (2) “tools of communication” and (3) “inviting difference”. After defining the categories, a written report of the findings was drafted, highlighting all of the main issues in each category and supporting the trustworthiness of the report with quotations that were translated from Finnish to English. Each of three categories explore and describe the experiences of the participants, provide valuable information on answering the two research questions and give a summary of the conversations that took place during the group interview. Findings are explored in detail in the following section.

5 FINDINGS

In this section we present the three main themes of findings: (1) “positivity”, (2) “tools of communication” and (3) “inviting difference”. The findings were collected from the discussions at the focus group interviews. The findings aim to answer the two main research questions of this study: (1) “How the participants of Intercultural Navigators programme organized by the British Council have perceived the Appreciative Inquiry method.” and (2) “How have they experienced its use of Appreciative Inquiry method in their professional and personal life after the training?”

All the quotations were translated from Finnish to English. The originals can be seen in chronological order in the appendix 4.

5.1 Positivity

One of the first topics that came up in all of the interviews was positivity. Positivity was seen as a base for good communication with others and a starting point for personal or societal development. Through participating in the IN programme and influenced by the philosophy of AI, participants had learned the value of trying to think in a more positive manner and seeing the good in people and in things in general. Positivity was seen as a guiding personal attitude that sometimes needs to be forced to remember even when there is a difficult phase in life. Every bad situation could be looked at from a different, more positive perspective and thus creating an opportunity to change the whole attitude on life. Some of the informants said that one of the main points in the learning of AI for them was that even a negative experience should be seen as positive learning experience.

“(...) that was perhaps the greatest epiphany for me (...) that, not only that you don’t need to fight but that life is not a constant battle but an opportunity. (...) The exact same thing one can be seen from the other side.” (quote 1)

It was discussed further among the participants on how to reach that positive way of thinking. Some of the participants stated that one way of embracing the attitude of positivity for them was by communicating in a more accepting manner rather than concentrating on the negatives. Many participants expressed that after learning about AI they saw the importance of focusing on positive things from the past as a method of moving forward. Focusing on the negatives stops the process of development and makes it difficult to move forward from a bad situation. Having positive thoughts and being for something rather than against it also makes it easier and less energy consuming to interact with others. The past, again, should be seen as a learning experience and as a starting point for something new and positive.

“(...) Things we carry from the past and especially when you look at your own history and think about what went wrong, perhaps we should think about how we have succeeded before. So then one will use the good things in the future and maybe forgets a little what went wrong.” (quote 2)

One of the participants had previously doubted the thought of seeing something positive about everyone’s lives. Through the process of learning about AI they had realized the importance of letting everyone find their own positive aspects in their lives. Even though the goal promoted by AI is to find a positive approach to everyone and every situation, participants of the interview expressed an opinion that one should always respect and appreciate the life and decisions of other people. Other people’s lives should not be judged from one’s own perspective but one should open up for different interpretations others have through their own life experiences. Another aspect of the value of positivity for participants, especially in their professional life, was seen in realising that no one can simply be told what is good in his/her life, because it is everyone’s own task to find what is already within them. Therefore when encountering a person who is having difficulties in finding positivity from their own lives it might be beneficial to encourage and motivate them to find that positivity by asking positive questions about their lives.

“It is not our job to figure out what is good over there but usually they know it themselves when someone understands to ask the question.” (quote 3)

5.2 Tools of Communication

Communication in general was seen as an important tool for reaching common understanding among different people and finding solutions for difficult situations. Good and positive communication was viewed as helpful in all aspects of life. In general the focus of reaching good communication was in personal development and own attitude towards good and positive communication.

It came up in both of the smaller group interviews that being able to hold back on expressing one's own opinion so strongly was an important skill at work where the personalities can be complex and opinions very different. It was clear that it had been, and still is a journey which one needs to work on to be able to remind themselves of the importance of being more neutral and keeping calm when the other person is testing their limits. This point of personal growth was seen as at least partly due to AI as well as growing older. AI had given tools to deal with emotions and to work on positive communication with others.

“But like me, I think the fact that my temperament is not quite as fiery, isn't only due to becoming older but also something like I, maybe due to this AI, for the first time have had tools to deal with how strongly and passionately I also take my own job and kind of to those encounters that come up with people.” (quote 4)

Many participants credited AI to have taught them calmness and acceptance of different ways of working and communicating also in their close relationships with their family and friends. Similarly to the calmer way of communication at work, some of the participants felt AI had an effect that resulted into them communicating in a calmer manner with their family also. It was not always as clear how to separate work and personal life in the concept of AI because it was seen as offering tools for overall personal growth which can be reflected in all areas of life. However one of the participants pointed out that it was much more difficult to use AI methods in interaction with close ones than in the more distant relationships at work for example.

“I feel like the more distant the relationships the easier it is to use them. Or let's say that I can recognise many things out of these I can accomplish at work. But when we go into for example sibling relationships where one is considerably closer and where one always wants to have the last word, it's very difficult.” (quote 5)

Some of the participants brought up that by learning to communicate better through AI they were able to help others by being better listeners. Many participants had modified their way of using language since the training. They said it had become more cautious, considerate and

positive and one of the biggest and common changes seemed to be the way of asking questions. Having the courage to ask was seen as an important tool for communication and as a way of challenging one's own views and thus being able to relate to different people. Through asking more questions they were able to gain more insight into the other person's life and learn more about them and in the process also learn more about themselves. By actively listening to the answers and through them asking more in depth questions they were able to also show to the person that they were truly listening and there for them free from judgement and that they could be trusted.

“You get so much from it yourself when you understand why the other person is the other person and I don't know if it has effected on the fact that when you think and don't judge and see the good sides, you get people to approach easier and bring that sort of trust to it.” (quote 6)

“And then there is again that power of questions, like again as a tool of communication, that let's not assume, let's ask. And by asking one can look for the good things out of difficult situations and can question one's own views.” (quote 7)

In all of the interviews asking “how?” instead of “why?” was brought up continuously as an important tool for good and positive communication. Informants explained that asking “why” easily has a negative undertone whereas “how?” gives space for the other person to explain their point of view. Listening to the other person's point of view and trying to understand it again creates change and moves things forward instead of focusing on the negatives.

“(...) these why questions, somehow get the other side to become defensive and then the basis is pretty difficult. Like for dialogue. Like why always this way, instead of how to move forward.” (quote 8)

5.3 “Inviting Difference”

Appreciating and accepting differences were discussed a lot in both sessions of the focus interview. This appeared as a topic that raises the most contradictions and questions. Participants felt that engaging with differences is an honourable and valuable competence to learn, but at the same time it is challenging to achieve and accept. Participants expressed that in the same way as positivity, interaction with difference is important for self-development and is also significant in a global setting.

Participants mentioned that AI ideology has helped them to see the potential in the encounter with differences as an opportunity to enrich self-knowledge and understand the world

better (quote 9), and see differences as a positive thing, for example as an engine for creativity and development (quote 10)

“Somehow through that I learned that it is actually very good that this kind of a different person exists. And that they act in a different way than I do, and how this helps me to maybe understand and see something new about myself or about someone else.” (quote 9)

“If this sort of genuine and created same mindedness forms then it will slowly dry up, the community, so then the diversity is needed to be able to be creative and innovative.” (quote 10)

Inviting the differences was categorised as an on-going process where the goal is not only to find a common ground and see the similarities, but also accept and respect the differences and be open to other opinions and ways of thinking. However this was also seen as the biggest challenge - many participants were questioning how much one should compromise one's own view in order to include others'. However in the end it was seen as an important skill to separate one's own views from others'.

“Yeah, it's sometimes difficult if the other person talks in a very different way. You easily sort of feel like you need to play that game too. Because you sort of also want to bring your own view across. Or maybe not like that either, I'm wondering where that line is that... have to think about the other person's interest of course and take into consideration where that line is. You must know how to sort of defend yourself too. Like sort of that inviting difference can't mean that myself needs to step aside or get ran over.” (quote 11)

The value of respect came up in the conversation many times. It was discussed that respecting one another is a very crucial fact for efficient communication and acceptance of diversity. Participants felt that in connection with AI respect to others could be showed through “power of question” which means not assuming anything, but willingness to step out of one's own way of thinking and to be truly interested in learning more about the other person and asking how others see the world and what they feel.

“ Asking is linked to respect (...)those stereotypes about other people often create huge tension to interaction and the respect that was talked about here is connected to this. That one should try to step out from those assumptions because they have an effect on communication. (...) that kind of a tool for

communication, that we don't assume but ask. And by asking one can see the good sides out of difficult situations and can question one's own perceptions." (quote 12)

However one of the hardest challenges of dealing with diversity was also that interacting with difference and respect towards others can be very hard when the other person does not offer the same respect back (quote 13). The informants also said that sometimes, if the situation truly shows no signs of improvements, leaving the situation (like a workplace) is the best one can do because not everything can be fixed (quote 14).

"If you don't feel respected then either way, even though you have all of AI in your back pocket, you turn your defence mode on (...) If it's enough of a conflict situation, then how do you drag that respect into it so you can still be there, like "tell me more"..." (quote 13)

"(...) also accepting the fact that not everything can be fixed or changed. Or that you don't have to be able to do it, that sometimes you just need to save yourself. And s/he had tried to survive in that community for a long time and make it better but then had to state that s/he is not well and has to leave it to be able to end up in a better state." (quote 14)

For many of the participants, the concept of respect in AI settings was also linked to the values of humanity and being treated equally as a basic assumption that everyone's opinion should be equally important and accepted. This implies that people should be willing to not only ask but also to hear and react to the answers. This however was seen as one of the most challenging factors in our society.

"It's actually been discussed quite a lot (at work) with us, in principle, the participation of children and youngsters' is applied as well as bringing children and youngsters in to our decision making process as well as administration. But it easily goes in a way that, yes, let's take the children along, but are they really listened to and how much value their message has, that is even more difficult." (quote 15)

Interaction with differences and finding a middle ground with people who are different in some way or another was a topic that was actively discussed at the interview. It was viewed that one of the most valuable parts of the AI method is connected with the ways one can overcome the challenges associated with accepting diversity by seeing also difference as a positive attribute and stimulating one's own curiosity about other people in an appreciative

way. However inviting difference is seen as a very important but difficult process and it appears as something that is much easier to talk about than actually practice, as it involves challenging one's own barriers. Some of the informants expressed that it can be difficult to stay in the state of mind of appreciation and understanding of others because it can be very energy consuming and sometimes tiring.

“It is in a way stepping out of one's own comfort zone. Like welcoming difference. (...) It is much easier to be around people who think exactly the same, or speak same language, for example. So it's straight away challenging when the other person is different in some way.” (quote 16)

“It's in a way a challenge, because of course one can think that it is very refreshing that people think differently about things. But often, in everyday life one silently hopes that if that person could just be the same as me, or work in the same way, it would be so much easier. And this is something that one can slip to very easily, to start explaining to everyone that I just couldn't stand it anymore because that other person is operating in such different ways to me.” (quote 17)

Some of the informants also expressed the opinion that the value of cultural competence and being interested in different people is often very hard and takes a lot of energy and therefore one shouldn't be considered as a lesser person if s/he is not able to keep the interest and ability to interact with differences all the time.

“As it was proven, one can get a lot and learn a lot from engaging with different people, but it takes sort of adjustments (to the situation) that takes a lot of energy. And sometimes you want just to be... (...) Like - ”right now I can't”, I think it would be good to remind that we all are just humans and perhaps learning and internalization all of those things takes time, but also that it is not compulsorily to keep those (processes) in active use 24/7. As comprehensively as possible, but.. you are not a worse person if you are not doing it all the time.” (quote 18)

One of the illustrative examples of how applying the strategies to reach true acceptance of diversity is easier said than done was the experience participants had at the time of the IN programme at the international event. Participants said that they had been excited and anticipated the meeting as they were expecting to meet more similar minded people who would see the diversity and way to approach it in the same way. In the end the situation turned out

to be surprisingly challenging, as it appeared that participants from other countries had a totally different perception on the programme and its content.

"What made it somewhat confusing was that we had had somewhat the same curriculum, these things that we'd gone through, that how we had interpreted them somewhat homogenically, that everyone (in the Finnish group) had somewhat the same view, which is surprising because we're all from such different backgrounds and then somewhere else had interpreted these things in a completely different way. That they'd, like, with the same stuff done completely opposite to us. So that was maybe also something that caused that reaction, like - don't, we know better how this is done." (quote 19)

Most of the participants felt that the reason why accepting others' point of view was so difficult was not only because of the high expectations and a natural reaction of disappointment but perhaps because of their shared "cultural package" of all being Finnish nationals. Being a group of professionals from different fields, they had perhaps viewed each other in the beginning as being very different and as this was overcome in Finland through AI and other methods learned during the programme, a similar effect was expected to happen at the conference filled with people with different backgrounds (quote 21). One of the participants also felt that this international event was a reality check on the methods that were presented to them during the IN programme and that this situation illustrated "the real working field" (quote 22).

"And I was thinking that we all (all the participants on the intercultural event) had that different cultural package and we (Finnish group) of course had a more homogenous one, because we all were from a Finnish culture. But then, when there came people from around the world with their own backpacks.. So then it immediately starts to feel boundaries of own backgrounds.. And how these different tools were there understood, I think that we had different views on it because we had that Finnish cultural interpretation, way of thinking, cultural heritage, it's all so different." (quote 20)

"I was thinking that it was a kind of reality check for us. As I am thinking that this situation never came across anywhere else, which is in some way inexplicable that in such a big group, and all of us from different professional fields and no one knew each other before.. And it was somehow magical what happened with our group and all the things that were taught... And then again what happened in that international conference was perhaps more of the working field" (quote 21)

As a conclusion for the discussion of difference and its difficulty, the participants still brought up the point that for understanding and accepting difference it is important to remember that the foundation for interaction with others should always first be concentrated on the positives and the common ground between people and from this starting point to emphasise the differences.

”(...) but in the end what we always had as a foundation for inviting difference was the thought of what we have in common. And what makes us the same and what joins us. And only on that we can start to build this, you think this way and I think this way but what should we work out of it from now on.”
(quote 22)

6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions and experiences the participants of the IN programme had of the AI method, one of the main methods and theories used at the programme. The IN programme was organized by the BC four years ago to create a common platform for potential future leaders of the multicultural Europe and to develop their cultural competence. The informants were 10 out of 40 participants of the programme. This qualitative study was conducted using focus group interviews as a method of data collection and inductive content analysis as a method of analysis.

In general, the participants seem to continue to value the methods and ideology of AI in their personal and professional lives although it was mentioned that regular meetings would help to keep the values and methods close in their memories.

The main categories of the findings: positivity, tools of communication and inviting difference are closely related to each other and could, from our perspective be seen as a continuum of thought regarding interaction between people. The participants viewed positivity as one of the main components of good communication and through effective communication and therefore creating more understanding one can embrace and accept difference. A similar interconnection can be seen in the theory of cultural competence, with positivity as the attitude towards cultural competence, tools of communication as the right skills and inviting difference as a way to gain more knowledge of others. To be able to gain cultural competence one needs to have knowledge of different cultures but in order to be interested in finding that new knowledge, one needs to have the right attitude (Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 14). Then again, to be able to use that knowledge and attitude in an effective way, one must have the skills to interact with others.

It was mentioned by some of the participants that it was hard to separate whether the method of AI was more useful in their personal or professional lives. This difficulty was also detected in the process of analysis when experiences seemed to be overlapping as self-development overall is a major part of also professional competence. Thus all the aspects presented in the findings can be considered important in personal life as well as in professional life and vice versa. However, some of the participants felt that it is easier in general to practice the method of AI, such as being positive and accepting of the other person's different opinions in neutral environments such as the working environment where the people are usually already at their best behaviour. It is also considered to be easier to search for compromises in a working environment rather than in private life, as issues discussed at work do not have the deep emotional meaning that the ones faced at home. Despite the overlap the following text will show the findings in the light of both personal and professional life as this was part of the initial main focus of this study and was also highlighted as an important aspect for our working life partner BC.

According to the findings, positivity is the core value of AI and the importance of a positive attitude was valued in every aspect of the participants' lives. However the main benefit of positive attitude towards oneself was more appreciated in personal life because of its empowering effect. Cooperrider (2005) in his exploration of AI anticipated that appreciating others is the key in developing change and positivity. According to the participants, a healthy way of moving forward and developing for the better is to concentrate on the good things about the past and bringing present to the future. This corresponds with the anticipatory principle of AI (Cooperrider, 2005) and the sixth assumption of AI presented by Hammond (1998).

The ability to see life in a positive light appeared to the participants as an important source for personal wellbeing and even though the difficulty of positivity in hard situations was recognised, it was considered important in order to be able to move forward from hardships and learn from past experiences. The difficulties that the informants raise in their perception of AI and its practical application were in line with the general criticism on AI which is mostly directed towards the difficulty of holding on to a positive way of thinking (Bushe, 2011; Grant, Humphries, 2006). However the difficulty was not seen in a danger of repressing negativity, as Bushe notes (2011), or not getting the full picture which is highlighted by Reason (in Grant, Humphries, 2006, 402) but more in the fact that participants felt that searching for positive aspects in other people requires a lot of energy and concentration. Still, an interesting remark made by one of the participants within the frame of positivity in professionalism was that positivity cannot be forced on anyone and that everyone should find their own positive things to concentrate (see quote 3) The person can be helped and encouraged to find the positive aspects in their lives through positive and appreciative questioning. In the light of

social work, we find it interesting that the concept of helping people find their own strengths and points of positivity is strongly connected to empowerment in client work.

AI appeared to give important tools for establishing good communication, which was considered very valuable in personal as well as informants' professional lives. Effective communication in the professional life is seen among the participants as an ability to be aware of one's own communication skills, thus being able to adjust to situations with people with different ways of working. Being fully aware of one's own culture and ways of working can be considered as the basis of cultural competencies. Only through gaining self-knowledge is one able to separate behavioural patterns of others from one's own and reflect on the common values as well as the differences between cultures without losing sight of one's own culture and its traditions. (Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 10-14). Successful interaction is seen by the informants as crucial for bringing understanding among different people. Creating understanding through interpersonal communication according to Gudykunst (1995, 10-15) happens when people engage in interaction with each other and become more familiar with each other, which in turn decreases misunderstandings.

Participants expressed that understanding the AI philosophy highlighted for them the meaning of language and questions. Language has a central role in AI methodology, as it is highlighted that the use of language and tone of questions has a direct effect on the response (Bushe, 2011). Paying close attention to the kind of language that is used and asking good questions, "how?" instead of "why?" for example were seen as excellent tools to reach good communication. Informants also expressed that asking questions not only helps to understand the other person better but it is also a way to show respect and appreciation towards the process of communication. Similarly, the AI ideology in its "poetic principle" (Cooperrider, 2005) expresses that communication through asking positive questions not only brings positivity to the other person but also creates an atmosphere of common understanding and stimulates the interaction and acceptance among people.

The challenge with communication and accepting differences according to the thoughts of the informants lies in mutual respect. Participants of the study expressed similar concerns as Dale, Scott (2011) and Van der Han and Hisking (Grant & Humphries, 2006) that AI is focused on personal development and therefore is limited. It is very hard to apply good communication skills and methods of AI to reaching understanding and respect towards others, when the other person is not willing to offer the same respect back. The effects of AI are visible for a person who is involved in the process and less effective to influence the communication with people who are not aware of AI.

The attempt to see the best in people and applying good communication skills is especially crucial for being able to appreciate and accept differences among people. “Inviting difference” stands out in the findings as one of the most important but at same time one of the most challenging aspects of the AI method. Engaging in positive interaction with people from diverse backgrounds was described by the participants as an ongoing process that involves stepping out from one’s own comfort zone and respecting and appreciating others’ opinion even when they do not match one’s own. This context is anticipated by AI theory in the AI assumptions of Hammond (1998) that everyone has his/her own reality and it is important to value differences.

One of the interesting aspects that informants point out in their understanding of what they considered to be the true acceptance of the diversity and effective intercultural communication in a professional view was the fact that one should take responsibility for the questions being asked. This means that there is a personal responsibility for truly listening and responding to the answers received and also to forward the answers to facilitate change in the society and to make the voices of the less powerful parties of the society heard and respected. This has a direct link to social change and the cultural competence of the society (Mason, 1993, 177-178) to advocate the rights and opportunities of the marginalised groups for a better integration in a dominant society.

According to the interpersonal communication theories (Gudykunst, 1995, 10-13), effective communication requires for the level of uncertainty and anxiety during communication to be lowered. These levels are considerably lower when dealing with people with similar backgrounds. (Gudykunst, 1995, 10-13). This is why knowledge of other cultures and having the right attitude of becoming curious of others is an important aspect of cultural competence to lower the levels of uncertainty and anxiety (Lasonen & Halonen, 2009, 14).

It was commonly agreed upon by the informants that diversity can bring positive outcomes for self-knowledge and social development, however reaching true acceptance of diversity is easier said than done. Participants also raise their concern that as inspiring as this process appears, it has a danger to suppress one’s own opinions and is very demanding on a personal level to carry on all the time.

One of the most interesting challenges that arose through the conversation was that differences can appear on different levels, and some of them are easier to accept than others. In general the informants approached the concept of diversity on a very wide spectrum and talked about differences that appear in different spheres, such as differences in personalities, professions as well as nationalities. The wider understanding of culture, outside national boundaries, was also chosen for the theoretical background of the study because cultural competence as the theoretical background for the IN programme also does not localise cul-

ture (Hall, 1995 in Lasonen and Halonen, 2009, 10) but in fact considers all humans to be with their own individual “cultural baggage” that everyone carries on to communicational situations.

It was also underlined by the participants that diversity should be approached from the perspective of common ground rather than differences (see quote 22). In the light of cultural competence, AI theory could be interpreted as an intention to not see the differences in cultures and opinions as an obstacle for cooperation but as a chance to build the future. Also in the settings of social work, it might be more beneficial to create change and cultural competence through a more positive view on culture.

The general enthusiastic flow of the conversation at the interview and also the fact that the participants were able to point out so many experiences of AI since the IN training shows that the AI method is an appropriate tool for exploring cultural competences and intercultural dialogue. Yet there are several dimensions by which AI as well as the IN programme could be studied to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the method. In the following paragraphed we will present some suggestions for further research taking into consideration aspects that came up within this small scale study.

The IN programme was implemented in 12 countries at the same time, the aims and main methods used in the programme in different countries around Europe being the same. However the participants themselves said that the way in which the AI and cultural competence were understood by the Navigators from different countries was very different. We feel that in order to explore the use of the AI method in promoting intercultural communication it would be interesting to compare the experiences of the IN participants in other countries.

One of the main goals of the IN training and one of the main topics within the discussions during the focus group interview was cultural competence. Cultural competence is a very complex concept that can be approached from different angles in different professional fields. It was also the intention of the IN programme to bring together people from diverse professional backgrounds all across Finland to explore “professional culture” and inter-professional communication. In order to explore the deeper concept of cultural competence on the level of inter-professional cooperation, it would be an interesting focus for further research to investigate and compare the experiences and perceptions of AI from the perspective of professional identities of the participants.

7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The credibility of the research ensures that the researcher has followed good scientific practice (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 129). The ability to present and argue decisions made during

the research process adds to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. These decisions are made throughout the process of the study, from the planning of the research design to the analysis and its interpretations. (Marshall & Rossman, 2012, 41). Traditionally, guides and measurements of good scientific research such as reliability and validity have been designed for the needs of quantitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2012, 39). Reliability calls for an ability to repeat the research and find the same results. Validity requires the focus of the research to be predetermined and the results to match the focus. However, because of ever changing situations and perceptions of individuals, it is difficult, if not impossible, to implement reliability or validity into qualitative research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 74). Thus it is more appropriate to concentrate on trustworthiness of this study to discuss its credibility.

In order to evaluate the trustworthiness of a study Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2002, 135) stress the purpose and the need of the study to be explained as well as to present the process of the study regarding the informants, collection of the data, the analysis and overall trustworthiness of the results.

The focus of this study was to find out how the participants of IN have internalised AI and experienced it in their thoughts and lives since the training four years ago. In order to examine thoughts and perceptions, one must ask directly the people involved (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 74), thus in this study the chosen method of data collection was interviewing. The purpose of the method chosen for interviewing, the focus group interview is discussed more in depth in data collection (see section 4.3).

The informants were 10 out of 40 participants of the IN programme. The invitation as well as all communication prior to the interview was done through the working life partner to protect the privacy of the participants. Confidentiality was agreed up on among all of the participants and especially regarding the video recordings of the interview, in the beginning of the interview. At the interview, the informants were provided with an opportunity to list their contact details in case they wanted to answer possible further questions or receive the final report. The decision was made to give an opportunity to the informants to suggest corrections to possible misunderstandings in the findings. A more detailed description of the interviews and confidentiality agreement can be seen in data collection (see section 4.3.3)

Even though qualitative research does not aim at generalising the results (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 132-133), it is good to be aware that the results might have been very different if more or different people would have participated in the study. Therefore no generalisations can be made of how one person has experienced AI and what kind of an impact the training has made on its participants. The findings of this study are specifically describing the subjective experiences of the informants which have been compared to each other to explore the possibilities of the method of AI.

During the group discussions, based on the consensus among the informants, a common understanding seemed to be reached (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 131-133). Nevertheless there is no way of truly knowing whether all of the experiences and perceptions are shared by everyone in the group. There is a probability that not all participants have even tried to bring their true opinions for everyone to discuss, perhaps in fear of rejection, lack of interest or perhaps due to a pressure to keep the conversation smooth and pleasant.

Even though we as study conductors made the effort of staying objective and influencing the data as little as possible, as explained in more detail in the study design the subjectivity of the researcher is inevitable especially in qualitative research as the researcher is the creator of the research question and the interpreter of the results. The results are presenting the truth because of the consensus of the informants but also as a result of the way in which the researcher has set the questions. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 133). However the objectivity and the truth of this study are increased by the fact that the interviews were semi-structured which gave room for the informants to express their thoughts in a more broad manner and being a group interview the informants were able to probe each other for different opinions and still reach a consensus.

The study was conducted in close relations with the BC. Nevertheless enough distance was taken to ensure additional objectivity for the subject. Neither of us was a part of the IN programme and had any previous involvement in the BC prior to the project. Most of the information for the training programme was on a general, European level and was received through written form. The validity of the participants' views was ensured by the fact that no representatives of the BC were present at the interviews. The interviews are explained in greater detail in study design.

While analysing the results, a few issues concerning ethical considerations arose. First was the concern of objectivity while bringing up themes from the data. The objectivity of analysis in qualitative research is sensitive as a lot is left to the interpretation of the researcher (Hirsjärvi, Remes, Sajavaara, 2008, 292-293). It was clear to us from early on in the analysis process which themes had come up as most interesting to us but we were also constantly careful whether those themes arose naturally and not due to us actively looking for them in the text. According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2008, 292) the researcher should have enough time between transcription, analysis and discussion to increase objectivity towards the project. The schedule for the thesis writing was relatively tight with the interview being conducted in February of 2013, the analysis in March and the discussion and final report being finalised in April of 2013. Therefore it might have been useful for the objectivity of the results had there been more time to take a step back between the stages to reflect and gain more distance on the subject.

Another difficulty discovered during the process of analysis was the question of whether the informants in the end had managed to separate the method of AI from the rest of the IN programme. Primarily the rest of the training was separated from the focus of the study due to discussions with the tutors of this thesis, after which it was decided that the training as a whole would be too broad of a focus for the small scale of a Bachelor's thesis. When consulting the working life partner, the AI method was pointed out as an underlying theme across the programme which resulted into the focus being placed on the method on its own. The fact that the programme had taken place four years ago made it challenging for the participants to remember the specifics of AI. However the very reason and the initial interest for the BC to have research conducted on the specific group of the first IN programme was to gain some insight on the long-term impact of their training. The goal of the programme in the end was to build participants' competencies in leadership and cultural competencies and to bring those skills back to their lives to be a part of positive changes around them. If successful, the hypothesis would be that it should not be a problem for the participants to point out the learned skills and their experiences with them even four years after the programme. The issue with the focus of the study however was not that the participants would not remember the specifics of the programme but that they will not be able to separate AI from the programme as a whole. Nevertheless the findings show that the participants had managed to embrace the method AI, thus were able to separate it from other theories.

Despite the difficulty of separating the AI method completely from the training, the findings of the study would suggest that the participants were able to integrate at least parts of the method into their lives. And even though some of the elements of the method were seen as difficult to implement in real life, at least the intent and willingness to try exists in the participants to this day. This, in our eyes, makes the results of this study positive and hopeful for the future of similar projects aimed at building trust and understanding and promoting appreciation of diversity.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: INFORMATION LETTER

Hei navigaattorit!

Olemme kaksi Laurea ammattikorkeakoulun sosionomi-opiskelijaa. Otamme teihin yhteyttä, koska olette osallistuneet British Councilin Intercultural Navigators koulutukseen vuonna 2008-2009. Teemme lopputyö-projektinamme tutkimusta osallistujien kokemuksista Appreciative Inquiry - metodista ja sen hyödystä teidän henkilökohtaiseen ja ammatilliseen kehitykseen.

Haluaisimme kutsua teidät ryhmähaastatteluun British Councilin tiloihin, Hub Helsinkiin (Annankatu 31-33). Olemme varanneet haastattelulle kaksi ajankohtaa, 6.2. TAI 8.2. klo 17-20, joista valitsemme toisen suurimman osallistujamäärän varmistamiseksi.

Nimiänne tai henkilötietojanne ei tulla julkaisemaan, vaan tutkimus on luottamuksellinen. Se, mitä kerrotte haastattelussa, tullaan käyttämään tutkimuksemme arvokkaana aineistona. Teillä on oikeus kieltäytyä aineiston julkaisemisesta ja oikeus nähdä valmis aineisto.

Jos tahdotte osallistua, toivomme, että otatte suoraan meihin yhteyttä sähköpostilla osoitteeseen anna.makipaa@laurea.fi tai valerija.lapina@laurea.fi mahdollisimman pian, mutta kuitenkin 18.1. mennessä. Vastaamme mielellämme lisäkysymyksiin tutkimuksesta.

Olisi hienoa jos pystyisitte osallistumaan!

Ystävällisin terveisin,
Anna Mäkipää ja Valerija Lapina

Appendix 2 - CONSENT FORM

Minä, _____, suostun osallistumaan tutkimukseen Intercultural Navigators -koulutuksen osallistujien kokemuksista Appreciative Inquiry-metodista. Annan luvan käyttää haastattelussa antamani tietoja tutkimukseen, joka on osa Laurea ammattikorkeakoulun sosionomitutkinnon opinnäytetyötä. Olen tietoinen siitä, että opinnäytetyössä, niin aineiston keruussa kuin analysoinnissa, sovelletaan tutkimuseettisiä periaatteita, kuten totuudellisuutta ja vaitiolovelvollisuutta. Henkilöllisyyteni ei tule tutkimuksen missään vaiheessa ilmi ja kaikki haastattelumateriaalit (videonauhat, muistiinpanot) tuhoetaan tutkimuksen jälkeen. Salassapitovelvollisuus koskee myös muiden osajanottajien osalta ja säilyy opinnäytetyön julkaisun jälkeen.

Olen myös tietoinen, että osallistumiseni tutkimukseen on vapaaehtoista ja voin kieltäytyä antamani aineiston julkaisemisesta missä tahansa tutkimuksen vaiheessa. Minulla on myös oikeus nähdä valmis aineisto ennen sen julkaisua.

Helsinki, 08.02. 2013

Paikka ja aika

Tutkimukseen osallistuvan allekirjoitus

Yhteystiedot:

Anna Mäkipää: anna.makipaa@laurea.fi

Valerija Lapina: valerija.lapina@laurea.fi



LAUREA
AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

Uuden edellä

Appendix 3 - GROUP INTERVIEW MENTOR'S GUIDE

Time	Length	What?	Why?	Questions	Tasks / who-does-what
17.00	30 min	Arrival of participants / Coffee	Catch-up and greetings		Introductions
17.30	10 min	Introduction (statement of basic rules and guidelines for the interview)	Who we are, what we do and why, how the results will be used, confidentiality, Consent Form, interview's topics and timetable		Valerija leads, Anna hands out forms and pens
17.40	10 min	Impressions of IN (introductory activity)	Individually in turn, refreshing the memory of IN collectively	- What was best about the IN programme for you?	Valerija leads, Anna takes notes of the conversation
17.50	50 min	What is AI	writing the answers on POST-IT notes individually, afterwards collecting the answers on board and opening up with the whole group, to see how participants remember it and what was most important	- Please take a moment and write down anything that comes to your mind about the AI method.	Anna leads, Valerija gives post in notes and takes notes during the discussion, summary of the conversation in the end.
18.40	10 min	Break	Setting up in small groups		Anna splits the group and gives instructions for the next session
18.50	60 min	How AI used in own life	Individual expressions and experiences about AI at the present time. Concrete examples	- What do you think about AI? - What are some concrete examples of using AI in your life? - If useful, in which part of your life did you feel it was most useful? - Did AI effect on your thinking patterns? How? - Have you been using AI in your work? How?	Each have our own small group, leading the discussion, keeping the focus on the experiences
19.50	10 min	Closure	Uniting the conversations together and sharing thoughts and last questions	Is there anything you would like to add or share with all group about the AI or your conversation in a small groups?	Valerija leads, Gives more information

Appendix 4 - ORIGINAL QUOTATIONS

Positivity

1. "(...) se oli ehkä se suurin oivallus mulle ja se oli se että, et ei pelkästään se että ei tarte taistella vaan että elämä ei ole jatkuvaa taistelua, vaan se on mahdollisuutta. Vaan et se on se täsmälleen sama asia, jonka voi nähdä niinku just toisin päin."
2. "...Mitä viedään mukana menneisyydestä ja varsinkin se, kun katsoo omaa historiaa niin miettii et mikä meni pieleen, pitäs ehkä miettiä että missä me ollaan onnistuttu aiemmin. Niin sit käyttää niitä hyviä juttuja jatkossa ja ehkä vähä unohtaaki et mikä meni pieleen." 3
3. "Ei se oo meidän tehtävä myöskään keksiä sitä mikä siellä on hyvin, vaan yleensä he tietää sen itse, kun joku ymmärtää sen kysymyksen esittää."

Communication

4. "Mutta siis se et mä, must tuntuu et se mun temperamentti ei oo ihan niin räiskyvä ei oo pelkästään vanhenemisen ansiota vaan myös semmosta että mulla, ehkä tän AI:N myötä on ollu ensimmäistä kertaa työkaluja käsitellä myös sitä miten niinku, voimakkaasti ja intohimoisesti mä myös itse suhtaudun omaan työhöni ja tavallaan niihin sellasiin kohtaamisiin jota ihmisten kanssa tulee."
5. "Must tuntuu et mitä etäisempi ihmissuhteita sitä helpompaa tollasii on käyttää. Tai sano taanko et mä pystyn tunnistaan näist monta juttuu mitä mä pystyn töissä toteuttaan. Mut sitku mennään esimerkiks sisarussuhteeseen missä on huomattavasti läheisempi ja missä aina haluaa sanoa vimeisen sanan, nokittaa, ni se on hyvin vaikee."
6. "Siitä saa tosi paljon itsekin kun sä ymmärrät minkätakia toinen ihminen on toinen ihminen ja mä en sit tiiä onkse vaikuttanu sitte siihen, et kun ajattelee, eikä tuomitse ja näkee niitä hyviä puolia ni saa ihmiset lähestymään helposti ja tuomaan semmosta luottamusta siihen." 7
7. "Ja sitte taas toi power of questions on taas, niinku taas sellanen kommunikaation väline, että ei oleteta, vaan kysytään. Ja kysymällä voi hakea just vaikeista tilanteista just niitä hyviä puolia ja voi kyseenalaistaa just niinku omat näkemyksensä."
8. "(...)tällaset miksi kysymykset, jotenki sen vastapuolen saa tämmöselle puolustuskannalle ja sit se lähtökohta on aika vaikee. Niinku sellaselle dialogille. Et miks aina näin, et sen sijaan sitte tää et miten päästäis eteenpäin."

Inviting difference

9. "jotenki silleen oppis että on todella hyvä että tällanen ihminen on, tai toisenlainen. Ja toimii näin eri tavalla kun minä ja mitä se auttaa niinku ehkä mua sitte ymmärtämään tai näkemään. Vaikka itsessäni tai sitte ehkä jossain muussa."
10. "Jos muodostuu tämmöin niinku joko aito tai sit luomaamaan luotu samanmielisyys nii sit se kuivahtaa pikkuhiljaa se yhteisö kasaan, että sit tarvitaan sitä diversiteettiä, että pystyy olemaan luova ja innovatiivinen."
11. "Nii, se on joskus vaikeeta jos toinen puhuu hirveen erilaisella tavalla. Et siin helposti tule sellanen olo et mun pitää lähtee tohon peliin mukaan, nokittamaan. Kun sitä kuitenkin jollain tavalla haluaa myös tuoda sen oman näkemyksensä esiin. Tai ei ehkä niinkään, mietin että missä on se raja, että.. pitää ajatella toisen etua tietenkin ja ottaa se huomioon et missä on se raja. Kyl täytyy itseäänkin tavallaan osata suojata. Et tavallaan se et inviting your difference ei saa tarkoittaa, että itseni täytyy väistyä, tai jää siihen alle."
12. "kysyminen liittyy siihen kunnioitukseen (...) ne ennakko-odotukset toista ihmistä kohtaan luo hirveesti jännitteitä monesti kohtaamisiin ja sit et kunnioitus, josta tässä on puhuttu nii liittyy siihen. Että koitetaan riisua ne ennakko-odotukset koska ne vaikuttaa siihen kommunikaatioon. (...) sellanen kommunikaation väline, että ei oleteta, vaan kysytään. Ja kysymällä voi hakea just vaikeista tilanteista just niitä hyviä puolia ja voi kyseenalaistaa just niinku omat näkemyksensä."
13. "---jos ei ite koe että tulee kunnioitetuksi niin sitte kuitenkin vääntyy vaikka kuinka ois kaikki Al:t takataskussa ni sitte vaa iskee niskakarvat pystyyn ja sie käyt puolustautuu (...)Jos on tarpeeksi konfliktinomainen tilanne niin kuinka siitä sitte väännät sen kunnioituksen niin että itse pysyt siinä, "kerro vaan lisää".."
14. "(...)et myös sen hyväksyminen et kaikkee ei voi parantaa, tai muuttaa. Tai et sun ei oo pakko pystyy siihen, et välillä on pakko pelastaa vaan itensä. Ja hän oli pitkään yrittäny pärjätä siinä yhteisössä ja saada sitä eheemmäks mut sit totes et ei et hän voi itse niin huonosti et on pakko lähtee täst pois että edes hän päätyy parempaan olotilaan."
15. "Täst on itse asiassa meillä puhuttu aika paljon ku meil periaattees kuuluu kaikessa lasten ja nuorten osallistuminen ja yrittää tuoda lapsia ja nuoria myös meidän päätöksentekoon ja myöskin hallinnolliseen. Niin, sit se kuitenkin helposti sitte menee siihen että joo otetaan ne

lapset mukaan, mutta kuunnellaanko niitä sitte oikeesti ja paljonko sillä niitten sanomalla on painoarvoon niin se on vielä vaikeempaa.”

16. ”Se on tietynlaista mukavuusalueelta poistumista. Et niinku toivottaa erilaisuuden tervetulleeks. (...)On paljo helpompaa olla ihmisten kanssa jotka ajattelee täysin samoin, tai, tai puhuu samaa kieltä esimerkiks. Et siin on heti niinku haastetta kun toinen on ihan erilainen jollain tavalla.”

17. ”Toi oli tavallaan haaste koska, tietenki voi ajatella et on hirveen virkistävää et ihmiset ajattelee asioista eri tavalla. Mut usein sitä arkisesti kuitenkin hiljaa toivois et kun toi nyt vois olla samanlainen kun minä, tai toimii samalla tavalla, nii olis paljo helpompaa. Ja se on semmonen mihin hirveen helposti lipsahtaa, et sit rupee selitteleen kaikille et emmä nyt jaksanu kun toi on niin erilailla toimiva ihminen ku mina”

18. ”Niinku todettiin, et siitä saa paljon ja siit oppii paljon et oot erilaisten ihmisten kanssa tekemisissä, mut se vie paljon energiaa tai semmost asennoitumista. Ja sit välil halua olla vaan...(…)Et nyt ei niinku pysty, et must ois hyvä muistuttaa siitä et kaikki on inhimillisiä ja ehkä et kaikkien näiden oppiminen ja sisäistäminen vie aikaa, mut myös se et näitäkään ei niinku oo pakko pitää aktiivisesti käytössä 24/7. Mahdollisimman kokonaisvaltasesti joo, mut.. ei oo sen paljo huonompi ihminen vaikkei niin ihan koko ajan sit tekiskään.” 17

19. ”se mikä teki siitä suht hämmentävän oli et meillä oli ollu suht sama tää opetussuunnitelma, nää asiat mitkä oltiin käyty läpi, et miten me oltiin tulkittu ne jutut suht homogeenisesti, et kaikilla oli suht sama kuva, mikä on just yllättävää ku me oltiin niin eri taustoista ja sit taas jossain muualla oli tulkinu nää jutut ihan eri tavalla. Et ne niinku samoilla eväillä toimi ihan päinvastoin kuin me. Ni se oli kans ehkä semmonen mikä nosti kans omat karvat pystyyn, et älkää, et me tiedetään miten tää menee.”

20. ”Ja mul tuli mieleen toi sitte taas et meil kaikilla taas oli se erilainen cultural package ja meil oli tietty homogeenisempi et ku me oltiin kaikki suomalaisest kulttuurista. Mut sitten ku alko tullakki ympäri maailmaa väkee niitten omien kapsäkkiensä kanssa ni se heti alkaa rajottaa et mistä taustoista tulee, miten voi olla ymmärretty nää eri työvälineet mitä oli, et meil oli eri näkemys siihen koska meil oli se suomalainen kulttuurinäkemys, tapa ajatella, kulttuuriperimä, kaikki on ihan eri.”

21. ”Mä aattelen myös, että se oli meille sellanen reality-check . Ku mä ajattelen, et missään koskaan ei oo mulle tullu sellasta vastaan, mikä on kuitenkin aika käsittämätöntä, niin isossa porukassa, kaikki aivan eri aloilta, meistä kukaan ei tuntenu toisiaan ennen. Ja siis se, se on ihan maagista se mitä meidän ryhmälle tapahtu, ja ne asiat mitä me opeteltiin täällä, ni sit se

mitä siel kansainvälises konferenssissa tapahtu ni se on varmaan sit vähä enemmän sitä taval-
laan työkenttää.”

22. “(...) mutta kuitenkin meillä aina siinä erilaisuuden kutsumisessa lähtökohtana oli aina se,
että mitä yhteistä meillä on. Ja mikä meissä on samaa, ja mikä meitä yhdistää. Ja sit vasta
sen päälle pystyy lähtee rakentaa sitä, että sie oot tota mieltä ja mie oon tota mieltä, mutta
mitäs me sitte tästä eteenpäin kehitellään.”